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QUEEN LOUISE OF PRUSSIA

1776-1810

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

GERTRUDE ARETZ

BY

RUTH PUTNAM

WITH SIXTEEN PORTRAITS

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QUEEN LOUISE OF PRUSSIA

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE biographer of Queen Louise wrote for a German public, who were certainly familiar with the past history of Prussia and with Prussian relations to other European states at the epoch of the French Revolution and of the astounding aftermath of Napoleonic domination.

For American readers, a brief historical summary may be a convenient background to the personal story of the woman in her futile duel with the French conqueror.

Prussia.—The nucleus of the later Prussian kingdom was the margraviate of Brandenburg—a territory in central Europe, of which Berlin was about the centre. For the present purpose, it is sufficient to say that this margraviate, after passing through various vicissitudes, fell in the early part of the 15th century under the personal control of Sigismund of Luxemburg, then

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Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. He appointed one Frederic of Hohe Zollern, at that time Burgrave of Nuremburg, as his deputy governor, that official being also authorised to act as Elector in the imperial elections. This same Frederic then lent his imperial chief a large sum of money, taking over the margraviate as security. Sigismund, chronically in financial straits, found it easier to cede the lands than to redeem them by settling the debt of 400,000 Hungarian gold crowns. At first the cession was regarded as temporary, but on April 18th, 1417, it was made permanent and Frederic was duly invested with the dignity of Elector of Brandenburg with all the rights and perquisites thereto pertaining. He then sold his rights as Burgrave of Nuremburg to the city and the Hohenzollerns took firm root in Berlin where the family was to be supreme for five hundred and one years.

Between this year 1417 and the beginning of the 18th century, the electors of Brandenburg extended their possessions, piece by piece. The most notable acquisition was the Slavic land of Prussia, whose name finally replaced that of Brandenburg. Treitschke says that the Hohen-

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zollerns were the real heirs of the Order of Teutonic Knights who had planted Christianity and German influence among the Slavic tribes on the Vistula. Thus the family came into their own when modern Prussia was born in 1701. At that date, Emperor Leopold I erected the estates of the Elector Frederic I into the Kingdom of Prussia and the area was wide enough, with its various accretions, to give to the new king the proper dignity. His predecessor, the Great Elector, had done his part towards Prussian aggrandizement by building up a strong military organisation as a substitute for natural boundaries which were wholly lacking to the realm. Nature had provided no defences whatsoever and the Elector won his title of "Great" by organising an army that could be a wall of protection; and his efforts were continued by Frederic the Great. Frederic finally had available a force of 150,000 men at his disposal and in a series of brilliant campaigns he expanded his sovereignty over Silesia and a portion of Poland; and, after the Seven Years' War, Prussia was regarded as having the most perfect military machine in Europe. In this regard she com-

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pletely eclipsed Saxony, Bavaria and Hanover; but she was still far from being the spokesman for all Germany.

When this narrative opens with the marriage of the heir to the Prussian throne with Louise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Germany was still a vague term, carrying in its signification neither unity nor solidarity. It was no body politic, although its legion of Teutonic sovereigns were supposed to owe allegiance—varying in degree—to the Austrian Emperor as heir to the dignity of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. And the Empire as imposing an array of princes as there was! There were more than three hundred separate sovereignties, ecclesiastical states and free cities, not to speak of about fifteen hundred imperial knights with legal jurisdiction over a group of subjects—some of the units being almost ridiculously minute.

When the furor of the French Revolution had been stemmed and when the ambitious plans of Napoleon began to take more definite shape, that newly constituted emperor entered into negotiations with the most westerly group of these diminutive statelets. Fear of the spirit

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of the Revolution drove the princes into his arms: the Confederation of the Rhine was constituted and the "protection" of France was accepted.

Hanover.—Among the German states, the position of Hanover, still an electorate, was peculiar. When in 1714 the Elector of Hanover succeeded Queen Anne on the English throne, as George I, his hereditary state remained a continental holding of the king and his successors, without being attached to the English realm. The link was purely personal. In the course of his aggressions, there came a time when Napoleon determined to strike England "wherever he could reach her," and his troops took possession of Hanover and held the State in the name of Napoleon. This was in 1803 when he was still First Consul; his own imperialistic plans were not matured and the ultimate disposition of Hanover was not certain. It was this fact that inspired a hope in Frederic William III that Napoleon might be induced to let him annex Hanover to Prussia. Undoubtedly Napoleon fostered this hope for a time in order to detach Prussia from the allies. Prus-

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sian diplomacy worked confusedly and the result was the catastrophe of 1806.

Russia.—The relations between the Czar and Prussia are made clear in the text.

Austria.—As already said, in the beginning of the 19th century, the Holy Roman Empire still had a nominal existence. But after the abdication of Charles V the election of the emperor became a pure formality and one member of the House of Hapsburg followed another so that the office had become practically hereditary in the family. The control over the German princes grew weaker. When, on July 17, 1806, the Confederation of the Rhine was formed, and sixteen princes accepted the "protection" of Napoleon, Emperor Francis II yielded to the fact that Napoleon had declared that he no longer recognised the existence of the ancient Empire, and resigned the dignity, assuming, August 6, 1806, the title of Emperor of Austria. Lord Bryce says: "It was the end of a long existence. 1006 years after the Pope had crowned the Frankish king in St. Peter's, 1856 after Cæsar had conquered at Pharsalia, the Holy Roman Empire came to an end."

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Here was a chance for Napoleon. He knew the value of a name as expressing a continuity. And when he called his son the King of Rome there can be no doubt that he was actuated by a vision of the revival of the historic Roman Empire.

R. P.

GENEVA, January, 1929.

PREFACE

QUEEN LOUISE has been the subject of a series of biographies, romances, dramas, and poems, written from various points of view and coloured by the political convictions of the authors. She is known but not known rightly. Yet now, in our days, her personality is more vivid than ever. But a true picture of the life and the ordeals of the German Princess requires as a background a full knowledge of Napoleon and his history. Without an understanding of the political plans of the mighty opponent, it is impossible to understand Louise as a standard bearer in the struggle for nationality and for the ideas of national reconstruction. In her lived the spirit of the epoch. Her share in Prussian state affairs laid the foundation of Germany's future, even though her political advice appeared, at the time, to militate against the welfare of Prussia.

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But upon the temporary ruin of Prussia arose the greatness and unity of Germany.

Excepting for the early years of her cloudless, peaceful marriage with Frederic William III, Louise's existence was full of sorrow and chagrin. The immediate results of her interference in public business were tragic for her and for her country. She lived through experiences in which neither romance nor cruel fatalities were lacking. From the idyllic hours of her girlhood to the harrowing moment of her early death, everything in her life was unprecedented and exciting. Fortune smiled on her for a few years only. She was still young when she grew familiar with the burdens of life. Driven out of her capital, robbed of her states, she suffered in exile distress and privation. The years brought to her bitter disillusionment in men whom she had loved and honoured, misfortune in political matters. Ill, and bearing the seeds of death in her breast, after heavy afflictions, she returned home. On the very threshold of greater prosperity to which she had herself contributed, she had to part from Life, perhaps conscious that she was not entirely blameless for the miseries that had come upon

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her land and people. She did not live to see the final fruits of the nation's efforts. She did not live to see the change of policy towards Napoleon, nor his overthrow from which sprang the freedom of Germany. She did not see the ruin of her dearest foe!

There were memorable moments in Louise's life! The first was her meeting with the Czar, a meeting for her so crucial! The others were: her share in the war of 1806; her presence in the army; the breathless flight to Memel; the meeting with Napoleon at Tilsit; the journey to the Czar's sumptuous Court; the relations with Baron vom Stein, with Hardenberg; the return to Berlin; the tragic visit to Hohenzieritz. The aim of this narrative is to portray the course of these events, impartially, without prejudice against the person of the Queen, but also without flattery. The narrative is based on testimony of the entire accessible sources—diaries, memoirs, contemporary political documents, above all on the letters between herself and her husband, besides the formal epistles of various Princes, diplomats and men of letters. An important contribution to the story is the

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correspondence between Louise and the Czar, the results of which were for her so serious! The narrative will show Louise in her fascinating feminine and human qualities, in her real greatness which was proved by the fulfilment of her task as the wife of a weakling, so difficult and trying. Only in what Princes do or leave undone are they to be comprehended.

In this record, many a previous opinion will be reversed or corrected without injury to justice. Next to the Czar, her husband was a fatality to Louise. Probably she would never have interfered in political matters, had Frederic William himself been energetic and capable. In accordance with her character as a true wife, Louise had no desire for affairs that demanded the head of a statesman. It was only when she saw that the King, himself a weakling, allowed himself to be guided by incapable ministers, that she ventured to touch the business of the State. Alexander I, whom Napoleon called superficial and who was so untrustworthy that it was impossible to know whether the feelings that he expressed were genuine, or whether, from vanity, he tried to appear as his position

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seemed to demand,—this Alexander was a disaster to Louise. For it was for the purpose of pleasing him, whom she so greatly admired, that she let herself be dragged into political activities.

From the list of the sources, it can be seen that the conclusions presented are based on careful documentation.

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QUEEN LOUISE OF PRUSSIA

Before her birth, her Genius came to Fate and said: "There are several garlands which I could give to the child—a wreath of beauty—the myrtle wreath of wedlock—a royal crown—a laurel and oak wreath of German patriotism—and also a crown of thorns,—which of all these shall I bestow upon the child?"—"Give her all, thy crowns and thy wreaths," said Fate, "but there is still another crown that is worth all the rest."

"In Memoriam"

Jean Paul Richter.

July 19th, 1810.

CHAPTER I

THE MECKLENBURG PRINCESS IN DARMSTADT

The grandmother's influence on Louise's development—The French education of the period—Mademoiselle Gélieu—Louise's first meeting with Goethe's mother—Coronation of Francis at Frankfort—Louise's début—Her dance with Prince Metternich—The Revolutionary Army crosses the Rhine—Flight of the dowager landgravine and her grandchildren to Hildburghausen—Headquarters of King Frederic William II in Frankfort—Plans for the marriages of his sons—Louise and her relations in Frankfort—Meeting with the King—Glimpse of the bride—First meeting of Louise and the Crown Prince—Betrothal—The camp at Mainz—Goethe's judgment on the beauty of Louise and Frederica—First meeting with Prince Louis Ferdinand—Letters

“**I**F posterity does not place my name among the names of famous women, it will, nevertheless, realize, when it comes to know about the calamities of this epoch, what wretchedness these have caused me, and it [posterity] will say, ‘She suffered much and was courageous in that suffering.’ ”

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These words were written by Louise to her confidential friend, Frau von Berg, when tragic misfortunes had overwhelmed Prussia, when Napoleon had pronounced the dictum which decided the fate of the kingdom. Who would have predicted for the "sunny, buoyant Princess Louise" the bitter sorrows that she was to experience as a Queen? Who would have predicted, when the Crown Princess entered Prussia's capital, joyously acclaimed by an enthusiastic populace, that she would be responsible, certainly in part, for the war destined to plunge people and land into arrant misery? But we will not anticipate the events.

Louise was, indeed, heavy laden with the misfortunes some of which she, herself, had called into being, and she paid dearly for faults committed in the belief that good was to come. She was hardly conscious of fault, for she was not ambitious like many famous women, who have seized the reins of power and have proved to be greater tyrants than their royal husbands. Passion was not one of her characteristics at any time in her career, because a higher reason and a religious conception of the world really

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did influence her both in what she did and what she left undone.

The acquired qualities of her character were chiefly due to her upbringing under her grandmother, an exceedingly able woman—Princess Marie Louise Albertine of Darmstadt. For, in 1782, when she was but six years old, Louise lost her mother,—Princess Frederica of Hesse-Darmstadt.¹ Her father, Charles Louis Frederic of Mecklenburg-Strelitz,² brother of the reigning Duke, Adolf Frederic IV, promptly married his sister-in-law Charlotte as his second wife. After a single year, she, too, died like her sister in confinement. The children were again motherless. Charles Louis had no inclination to venture a third marriage. He resigned his post as field-marshal in the Hanoverian army and started off

¹ Darmstadt, the capital of Hesse-Darmstadt, lies east of the Rhine, south of Frankfort.

² Mecklenburg-Strelitz and Mecklenburg-Schwerin together had composed the Duchy of Mecklenburg which lay on the Baltic Sea, north-west of Prussia and north-east of Hanover. In the XVII century, the territory was divided between two heirs to John Albert, Duke of Mecklenburg. Henceforth there were the two ducal lines. At the time of Louise's birth, March 10th, 1776, her father was Governor of Hanover, his elder brother being Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. In 1794, the duke died and Charles Louis Frederic succeeded to his title, which was changed to that of grand-duke at the Congress of Vienna, and this title fell, in 1816, to George, the queen's favourite brother.

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travelling, leaving three daughters to the care of their grandmother at Darmstadt. His eldest girl had been married for a year in Hildburghausen and the sons remained in Hanover; and the girls were both happy and well taken care of. The grandmother was, undoubtedly, a remarkable personage, quite broadly cultivated intellectually, naturally vivacious in temperament and very capable, being free from the prevailing sentimentality of that period. She had a clear comprehension of the children's personalities and was intelligent in her methods of developing the two girls to the best advantage. Louise's own sunny disposition, her high spirits, her feeling for Nature, her overflowing joy in mere living combined with a love of humanity and genuine interest in her fellow-creatures were all qualities fostered by the ways of her grandmother, and they were exactly the type of qualities to win popularity as the Crown Princess certainly did win it.

Louise came to Darmstadt in 1786, when she was just ten—an age when a child's character is most impressionable for good or bad influences. In the old palace on the Market Place, Louise

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heard nothing but good. The dowager landgravine was living there with her son, Prince George—"jolly Uncle George" as Louise called him. She was devoted to this kinsman, for he was never a spoil-sport and was always ready to listen to confidences about her escapades. Later, he proved a staunch friend and aid.

The grandmother was a true palatine, singularly free from affectation. Thanks to her, the young Princesses were spared pedantic Court training. She selected teachers for them who were personally sympathetic and who did not try to suppress their natural tendencies. Fräulein Salome von Gélieu—a pastor's daughter from Neuchâtel—was Louise's special governess and she found herself entrusted with a sprightly little maiden, rather inclined to adventures which were not invariably approved by her elders. The Swiss woman proved wise in knowing when to loosen the reins of control, while she was not in the least blind to Louise's various weaknesses, which did not, indeed, entirely vanish with childhood. The little girl's passion for sweetmeats, her capriciousness towards her sisters and her unpunctuality—all were defects

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recognised by her governess and corrected to some extent, but not entirely eradicated in the years of tutelage. Later, as bride, Louise was frequently criticised by the Crown Prince for her indulgence in sweets, her tendency to be late, her careless expenditure and her irregular eating.

Naturally, at an epoch when French influence was dominant in Germany, the education of all higher-class children was carried on with French methods and they were expected to be as familiar with French as with their mother tongue. In this respect, fashion was exactly the same as it had been a century earlier. The Palatine Liselotte¹, at the Court of Louis XIV, was thoroughly at home in French but carried on an extensive German correspondence. On the other

¹ This "Liselotte" was Elizabeth Charlotte, daughter of Charles Louis, elector palatine, and a Hesse-Cassel princess. She was born in Heidelberg in 1652, and died at St. Cloud in 1722. She was educated in Hanover by her aunt, Sophie, Electress of Hanover, and married Philip, Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIV. She was a very gay, vitalised person and her letters are a rich source of information about French court life, but, owing to circumstances, she brought much misfortune on the palatinate. The male line of her family became extinct and Louis XIV laid claim, in her behalf, to the succession and invaded the palatinate to make good those claims. This was when Heidelberg Castle was destroyed. Her daughter Charlotte was mother of thirteen children, among whom was the Emperor Francis I.

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hand, Louise used French almost exclusively, writing in German only to her father and brother. With her husband, she usually employed French, but it was by no means invariably correct—at least in her youth. For instance, she would write *cayez* for *cahier*, *oberge* for *auberge*, etc., etc. Still she was fluent in her conversation and such fluency was considered indispensable. Princes and Princesses who could only express themselves in their native German were rather looked down upon. For instance, the hereditary Prince of Anhalt-Dessau was proposed as a husband for a cousin of Louise, who became, later, Princess Anton Radziwill. She writes in her *Mémoires* that she did not care for him, adding, “My father shared my aversion for the hereditary Prince.¹ He did not find in him the qualities he prized. The Prince could speak nothing but German.”

Nevertheless, neither the grandmother nor the French governess succeeded in making the sisters abandon the quaint Darmstadt dialect which the young Mecklenburgers had picked

¹ This title—*Erbprinz*—is used for a presumptive heir to a title. A crown prince is direct heir.

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up in their early years. They found it a very sympathetic medium. And as a matter of fact, the dowager landgravine herself spoke pure Darmstadt dialect, and although the official Court language was French, the family speech was invariably German. And so Louise retained many fresh, charming expressions which quite captivated the Prussian Prince on their first acquaintance. He, reserved and cold as he was, felt the spell of the South German speech which possessed a flexibility and attractive informality of its own.

In other branches of learning, Louise was no model pupil, except, perhaps, in religious instruction, which greatly interested her. When she was fifteen, she wrote in her note book on religion: "May God bless this class work and give me strength to bring to fulness what I have undertaken—to live as a Christian."

At the same time, in spite of this evidence of earnestness, capriciousness and waywardness were innate in the child and she really was, naturally, a wild little being. They called her *Jungfer Husch*—Mad Louise. The little girls were delighted when their father and brothers

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came to Darmstadt, but the Duke generally lived in Hildburghausen and left the direction of the training of the young people—sons as well as daughters—to the dowager landgravine. As she believed that nothing was more instructive for her charges than travel, she frequently took the whole group on visits to other Courts, or she would send them under the charge of Mlle. Géliou and Uncle George to Strasbourg, to The Hague, to Rotterdam or for a trip on the Rhine. This last experience was never forgotten by Louise.

In 1790 and 1792, at the time of the coronations in Frankfort, successively, of Leopold II and Frances II as Emperors, the Princesses were shown the great world. On the first occasion, Louise was fourteen but still very childish. The girls were lodged in the house of Goethe's mother—*Frau Rat*, or Mme. Councillor, as she was called. Delightful were the hours spent with her. To an advanced age, "Frau Rat" felt herself perfectly at home with young folks—both boys and girls. With youth, she was young again. She played about with them like a child, especially with the hereditary

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Prince, George, Louise's favourite brother. Sixteen years later, she recalled those pleasant days. In August, 1806, she visited her son at Carlsbad and met Queen Louise and her sister. Frau Goethe wrote to her son: "She [Frederica], the Queen of Prussia, and the hereditary Prince will never forget the enjoyment of the days in our house; released from a stiff Court etiquette, they felt so free—they danced, sang and ran about the livelong day. At noon, they came, provided with three forks, to my little table, gobbled everything set before them,—said that the food was delicious. After dinner, the present Queen played and I waltzed with the Prince—then I had to tell them about the previous coronations, etc."

At the second coronation—July, 1792—when Francis II succeeded to the short reign of his father, Louise, then sixteen, made her *début*. This time, the dowager landgravine herself accompanied the young party and they all lodged, not in the house of the Frau Councillor von Goethe but in that of a worthy merchant, Manskopf. Nor was the elder sister, Therese, of the party. As hereditary Princess of Thurn

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and Taxis, she had for three years been living in Regensburg. Although all the elegance, beauty and distinction of Europe was assembled at Frankfort, the atmosphere was not gay as it had been two years previously at the coronation of Leopold II. The Reign of Terror prevailed in France, and the depression spread across the border. In the previous June, the mob had pressed into the Tuileries and insulted the King and his family. Two months later, in August, Louis XVI sat in the Temple, a prisoner. Prussia and Austria were in Champagne as allies. At any moment they might suffer defeat and the French revolutionary army might press across the Rhine and swamp Germany. This state of affairs affected society in Frankfort. In connection with the coronation festivities of 1792, Prince Metternich wrote, "The contrast between current events and what was passing across the frontier was too striking to be ignored. It could not fail to make a painful impression. Considering the circumstances [as a protest against the revolution], the coronation ceremonies were more pompous than on the preceding occasion. Prince Anton Esterhazy,

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acting as the Emperor's personal representative, entrusted me with the conduct of the entertainment which he gave after the coronation. I opened the ball with the young Princess Louise of Mecklenburg. This rather poverty stricken daughter of a petty Prince had been obliged to make her own silk shoes for an occasion like this, not to speak of her other garments. Her pocket money was very limited—five gulden and thirty kreutzers a month! And as she had to make little personal gifts, and often required little decorations for herself, this sum was soon gone."

After the coronation festivities, the Darmstadt ladies departed from Frankfort. Louise and Frederica have left no account of their own recollections of this brilliant event. Then what had been feared, actually happened. In September, 1792, the allies were driven back at Valmy and the French, under General Custine, crossed the Rhine, soon occupying Speyer, Nancy and Frankfort. Darmstadt was too near hostilities to be a safe place of refuge. In October, it was rumoured that the French were actually there and fear was universal. The old landgravine was, however, a determined woman. She had

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the trunks packed promptly and there was a regular exodus to Hildburghausen, to the residence of Duchess Charlotte, Louise's eldest sister, where the father was already installed.

The youthful court of Hildburghausen¹ was known as one of the intellectual centres of Germany. The marriage of the Duchess Charlotte had not proved happy, and she had turned for consolation to art and literature. Her society consisted chiefly of intellectually distinguished men and women, the group including many artists. There were many musical entertainments, especially vocal, of which she was passionately fond. The *Singelotte*²—young poets and authors—flocked about Charlotte and to many of them a way was paved towards success by the sympathetic Duchess. Her salon became famous. Not only were there great entertainments but also many pleasant, informal occasions. Louise and Frederica found life there very agreeable, in spite of the war on the western frontier. A summer and winter were passed thus pleasantly and then the girls and

¹ Town in duchy of Saxe-Meiningen.

² A name adopted by a circle of amateurs.

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their grandmother returned to Darmstadt. This time they travelled by way of Frankfort, whence the French had been expelled by their Uncle George and his grenadiers. The allies had gone on and the King of Prussia, Frederic William II, was using the city as headquarters. He was accompanied by his sons, the Crown Prince and Prince Louis. Prince Louis Ferdinand¹ was in his train, too, a handsome, gallant young man who captivated society by his intellect and really marked musical talent. There were other remarkable people in that little Frankfort Court—personalities distinguished in various realms, princes, field marshals, statesmen, as well as adventurers and charlatans—all having flocked in from Germany and Austria. Besides these transient visitors from the Empire, there were a mass of French émigrés who still cherished hope that the Revolution would soon wear itself out and that the Bourbons would return to the control of France.

The Darmstadt ladies intended to proceed on their way after one night in Frankfort but the

¹ Son of Prince Ferdinand of Prussia, brother of Frederic the Great, b. 1772, d. 1806.



PRINCESSES LOUISE AND FREDERICA

From an engraving by J. F. Bolt

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King sent them an invitation to dinner and they felt bound to postpone their departure.

Very possibly the landgravine had not made this visit to Frankfort quite casually. Without any knowledge on the part of the young girls, certain suggestions had been mooted between Frederic William II and Uncle George in their regard. The King was anxious for both of his sons to marry and Uncle George, always up and doing, had thought of his nieces, Louise and Frederica, as eligible *parties*. Their father, Prince Charles, was sounded on the matter and did not at once fall in with the project, but still went so far as to send his Privy Councillor Kümmelman to Frankfort to spy out the land.

On the first evening of their stay, the Crown Prince saw the Princesses at the theatre. But the box was latticed and he had only a slight impression of his future bride. On the following day, Frau Olenschläger invited the Princesses, the Crown Prince and Count Medun to breakfast. The moment that Louise and Frederica entered the room—the Prince was there first—the young man was fascinated by the charms of the two. The same thing had happened to the

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old King when he had met the pair on the previous evening at the entrance to the theatre. Count Medun made the presentation of the Crown Prince, who really was, at first, quite undecided as to which of the two could claim his heart. Both attracted him, although they were quite different. Finally his preference was fixed on the elder, as the first impression of her beauty grew on nearer view.

As his mind worked very slowly and he was shy, a quick decision was difficult, especially as his brother Louis was entirely indifferent in the whole matter. The latter accepted the fact that he had to marry one of the Princesses but, as he was in love with some one else, Louise and Frederica did not interest him at all. On his part, it was to be a mere *mariage de convenance*. Louise and Frederic William met three times more before the King made the grandmother a formal proposal for the hands of the two girls for his two sons. These meetings were at a ball given by the Chancellor von Wrede, at the King's table at headquarters in the Red House on the Zeit, and in the house of the patrician, Gontard. Later, on March 19, a more intimate

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meeting between Louise and the Prince was allowed. This occurred at the White Swan, where the landgravine was staying. The two Princes began their personal wooing on the same day and each couple was left quite alone in a room without "any etiquette." It was long before the shy, awkward Crown Prince managed to speak. Finally he plucked up his courage, for Louise was perfectly natural and cordial—so entirely unaffected that his diffidence wore off.

"I asked if I might and a kiss sealed this wonderful moment." Such was Frederic William's own account of his engagement with Louise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. On April 24th, in the old Castle on the Market place in Darmstadt, the official betrothal of the two Princesses took place. The exchange of rings was effected by the King of Prussia himself.

Beautiful, very beautiful, the bride must have been, for all contemporaries, friends and foes alike, are at one on that point. "There was a beauty of expression, even more attractive than the beauty of form. Her eyes were eloquent and glowed with feeling and power of imagina-

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tion in a fashion to give them a peculiar charm. Louise was one of those women by whom men and women alike are fascinated."

Goethe was quite carried away by her grace and certainly he was a connoisseur in feminine beauty! On May 29th, 1793, the poet saw both Princesses in the train of the grand Duchess of Weimar at the camp before Mayence. He notes his impressions in his Diary. "Sheltered by my tent, I could safely watch them passing to and fro with the ladies and gentlemen, and really those two young women must be counted as heavenly visions. The impression they made on me will be everlasting."

Frau von Voss, later *Oberhofmeisterin*—mistress of ceremonies—to Louise, also makes a note of her first impression of the future Crown Princess. "The Crown Princess has a charming figure. Her appearance was both noble and charming. Everyone who saw her was irresistably attracted to her. Even rather stolid and undemonstrative men were in ecstasy at first sight of her."

"She floated," wrote Ritter von Lang—a man not given to gallantry and amiability—

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“like a celestial being before me—a real enchantress if I have ever seen one.”

As already said, her fascination was felt by women as well as men. Princess Anton Radziwill, sister of Prince Louis Ferdinand, said, “At that time (1793), the Crown Prince and his brother made the acquaintance of the Princesses of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. There was (in Frankfort) much talk of their beauty. The Crown Prince was especially taken by the lovely Princess Louise. . . . The second sister, Frederica, was not such a regular beauty as her senior, but she had an attractive figure, was exceedingly amiable and anxious to please, so that she was often preferred to the noble beauty of her sister.” And, later, at the reception of the Princesses in Berlin, the same observer is captivated anew. “Never have I seen a more lovely being than the Crown Princess. Her gentle, modest expression of countenance united to her distinguished beauty has won her all hearts.”

Above all, that old connoisseur in women, Frederic William II, was delighted with his future daughters-in-law. He admired both and

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rejoiced in the prospect of having two such charming young women in his court. Three days after he had seen them in Frankfort, he wrote in happy vein to Berlin.

“Since my last letter, I have had no time to write. We have lived in continual festivity on account of the presence of some distinguished strangers—Princess George of Darmstadt and her two lovely grandchildren, daughters of Prince Charles of Mecklenburg—and also nieces of the Queen of England. When I laid eyes on the two angels for the first time at the entrance to the theatre, I was so struck with their beauty that I was almost beside myself. I was most anxious that my sons should see them and fall in love. On the following day they were introduced to them at a ball and were enchanted. I did my best to have the young people see each other and become acquainted. As far as I can understand, the two angels are as good as they are fair. Now love has come and the marriages will be speedily decided on.”

The honourable but phlegmatic Crown Prince expressed himself less enthusiastically about his bride. But still she pleased him very well and

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Louise could be assured that if he found her pretty and said so in simple words he really meant it, for even as a bridegroom he could not flatter. He was no love-lorn sentimentalist. It was not a sudden case of passion that increased with desire. He loved calmly and uprightly and the girl felt that. Just because he met her simply and shyly she seemed to prize him. He pleased her in spite of his awkward bearing and his cold manners. Perhaps the sixteen-year-old girl was so inexperienced in love matters that she failed to demand for herself and her dazzling beauty glowing passion, love that forgot all else. Passion was really alien to her nature. The basis of her character was gentleness and tenderness. At any rate, she seemed satisfied with her lot. Immediately after the betrothal, she wrote to her sister Therese in Regensburg: "Thou canst not think, dear Therese, how contented I am. The Prince is extraordinarily good and frank. There is no needless bombast in his speech, but he is admirably true. In short there is nothing left for me to wish for. The Prince pleases me and when, for example, he declares that I please him and that he thinks

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me pretty, I can believe him, for he has never said a flattering phrase to me!" In Louise's words about her fiancé there is nothing of heaven-sent joyousness, no enthusiasm. It looks, indeed,—at least for a sixteen-year-old maiden—as if she were almost too sensible in her bridal happiness.

In June, the siege of Mayence began and lasted four weeks. The Crown Prince had to take the field. His spirit was not martial, nor was he in the least convinced of the necessity for this campaign. His opinion was shared by most Prussians. Only the old King and some of his councillors approved the active hostilities against the French Revolution which were forced upon Frederic William II, chiefly by his friends the *émigrés* and the Rosicrucians. Among the public there was more sympathy for France than for Austria. In opposition to the war and in the first glow of his engagement, the Crown Prince tried to shirk his military duties as far as he could. He often found it possible to visit his fiancée or to have her come to the camp. Frederica was always with her and the two made almost daily trips to Mayence, where the



FREDERIC WILLIAM II

From a drawing by William Chodowiecki

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King was installed as well as Prince Louis Ferdinand, who managed to lead a social life without forgetting his military rôle! He distinguished himself in service and was quite severely wounded before Mayence, rather to his pride. His sister, Princess Radziwill, said: "People went to the camp at Mayence as if to a picnic. The most elegant ladies were *en evidence* there. Most of the officers had their wives with them — the Lieut.-Colonel — later General von Rüchel—had his daughter in camp as well as his wife." It chanced that Frederica's fiancé almost lost his life at this time by an accident. He lay down before the fire in his tent and fell asleep. A couple of sparks caused a blaze and soon the entire structure was in flame. A soldier on guard before the tent smelled the smoke. He rushed in and saved Louis from being burned to death.

In addition to the camps at Mayence, there were other places where Louise had opportunities of seeing her fiancé—at Grossgerau, in the castle of Kranichstein, and at the quarters of Uncle George at Braunshardt. After the fall of Mayence, Frederic William was sent into the

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Palatinate as commander of the forces besieging Landau and then ensued a lively correspondence between the young people. How little Louise cared for etiquette and how simple and natural she was, is shown by a slip she added, surreptitiously, to an official letter to her betrothed. Before being despatched, all her notes had to be passed on by her grandmother, so that the latter could be sure that all was *en règle*. This, naturally, prevented the spontaneity in which the unconventional Louise was inclined to indulge. She wanted to write intimately and let her fiancé see her as she was—and that was a fundamentally simple human being. And so, after the epistle had been approved, she managed to add a postscript unseen by critical eyes.—“You will have noticed, beloved friend,” she writes, “that I pass over in silence many things mentioned in your letter. Do not be surprised. Papa and Grandmama wished me to show my letters to them and grandmama has, above all, insisted that I should not write too tenderly to you. Good, that thoughts and sentiments are scot free and no regulations can be made about them. Just listen, dear Prince! The names

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‘friend’ and ‘dear Louise’ and their like give me supreme joy. Call me what you will. Never in my life would it come into my mind to take that ill. On the contrary, it makes me happy. Since at the first moment of our acquaintance we were together, quite naturally and without constraint, I have held it as my duty to tell you the reason why a certain elaborated style occurs, which did not correspond to my nature. You might think that I had changed towards you. But I assure you that such is not the case. On the contrary, you are not only not indifferent to me. You know what I feel for you and I do not need to repeat that I love you from the bottom of my heart. Be always the same towards me. I confess to you that my heart is incapable of change. Please, dear Prince, do not show this little slip to anyone. If you answer it, do so on a separate sheet so that grandmama will not see it. Otherwise I might have trouble. One thing more. Grandmother makes me write a rough copy of my letter to you, because my spelling is so bad. I confess it is not good, but you ought to know my faults. Had I been more diligent as a child, I could now

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express the feelings of my heart without mistakes—now I can only do so faultily.”¹

Later, Louise’s letters became more confidential, especially when she wrote in a wonderful kind of pedler’s French (K^underwelsch), French and German mixed together, or when she interpolated Palatine dialect phrases like the following: “Die alten Schateken, die Wägen fahren vor, die alten metallenen Klocken läuten, und ich, ich habe keine Lust in die Kirsche zu gehen, God forgive me. Farewell, royal highness of my heart! I must go to church or my old granny will beat me.” (half in French). Or: “Je mange depuis sieben weniger un quart des cerises délicieuses noires comme un Hut et he souhaiterais, pour qu’elles me paraissent tout à fait délicieuses, la présence d’un certain Monsieur de votre conaissance.” With the *certain Monsieur* the witch meant, naturally, the Crown Prince himself.

She saw him once more in Mannheim at the house of the Princess Palatine, Augusta. At the end of August they parted, not to meet again until November, the last time before their

¹ Her faulty German is frequently very difficult to render into English.

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marriage. After this last interview, Louise wrote to him: "I anticipate perfect happiness—not romantic happiness, but assuredly we shall be as happy as a married couple who love each other can be."

These words seem almost too sensible for a girl bride, and they are, however, somewhat contradicted by the other passages already quoted. Louise simply could not say what she did not thoroughly believe. Joy shouting to heaven or profound sadness were both alien to her nature. But she really did possess a combination of true simplicity and high mindedness in addition to being roguish, merry and free as a child, ready for sport, sometimes innocent, sometimes foolish—a complete contrast to the stiff, shy nature of Frederic William. She liked to pull the wool over her elders' eyes. For instance, once, in order to divert her grandmother's attention during one of the visits of the Crown Prince, she sent Adjutant Schack to entertain the old lady so that the fiancés could pour out their hearts to each other, free from observation. They were thus spared "her stories and conversation"—"For," wrote Louise

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later to her husband, "I believe she would have preferred to have you court her than me."

Yet with all this tendency to high spirits and with her charm and winsomeness, there still was in Louise's bearing a certain fundamentally cool, high-bred reserve, which many people who did not know her intimately took for coldness and arrogance. It was a quality well suited, however, to a future Queen of Prussia in a Court that had a bad reputation on account of the dissipated life of the old King and the unsatisfactory domination of the Countess Lichtenau. It was a reputation that had made Louise's guardians and relations hesitate about letting the girls marry into this "caldron of sin." One of their aunts, especially, was greatly opposed to the alliances. It was only the further information about the personal character of the Crown Prince himself that decided the matter. When the aunt saw something of him, she was delighted,—“Ah, he is an honourable man, the good Crown Prince. I am very fond of him.”

CHAPTER II

THE CROWN PRINCESS IN THE COURT OF THE OLD KING

Entry of the Crown Princess into Berlin—Popular enthusiasm—Introduction of the Princesses to the court—The wedding of Louise and Frederic William—Ancient Prussian court wedding customs—Waltzing forbidden—Louise's popularity—Scenes from the old King's court—Berlin customs—Louise in her new environment—Her love for dancing and amusement—Her attempts to affect her husband intellectually—Her real loneliness—Frederica—Her influence over Louise—Dangers of a big city—Prince Ferdinand's advances—His personality—The end of the idyll—The personality of the Crown Prince—Louise's married life—Death of Prince Louis and of the widow of Frederic the Great—Illness of the King—Louise in Pymont—Paretz—The dying King—Charlatans and adventurers—The Lichtenau and her friends—Last hours of Frederic William II.

ON a fine winter's morning, December 22nd, 1793, the seventeen-year-old Princess Louise made her entry into Berlin. The dowager landgravine of Darnstadt and her brothers George and Charles of Mecklen-

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burg-Strelitz accompanied her. The grandmother was all aglow with pride and happiness. Louise rode in the golden coach in which all the royal Prussian brides were brought into the Capital. The Crown Prince and Prince Louis received the Princesses in Potsdam at the southern gate of the Castle where the new households of the two brides were gathered.

The Berlin populace were delighted to welcome the Crown Princess and the streets were profusely decorated with flowers and flags. An immense crowd thronged the city. Everyone was captivated by the simplicity and informality of the bride and she really took all hearts by storm. The procession wound from the Potsdam Gate through Leipziger—and Wilhelm Strasse to the Linden, past thousands of gaily shouting people who cheered and waved their handkerchiefs in wild enthusiasm. When Louise was greeted by a group of white-clad little maidens, she spontaneously bent down and kissed the pretty young leader as the girl spoke some verses and presented a bouquet. This gesture was a great surprise to the crowd who had never before seen such a breach of etiquette.

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In the evening, Louise and Frederica were presented to the court over which Queen Frederica presided. It was rumoured that she had desired her own nieces—Princesses of Baden—as daughters-in-law and was not particularly pleased at the choice of her sons. At the *Lottospiel* her ill humour was openly displayed towards Princess Louise. Rather naïvely the Crown Princess greeted the courtiers as they passed and her mother-in-law remarked sharply, “When I hold Court, the Court belongs entirely to me and I alone can give greetings.”

On December 24th, Louise’s wedding was celebrated in the White Room of the Berlin Palace with all the old time ceremonies conducted by Councillor Sack. The bride looked enchanting. “Fair as an angel,” said Princess Radziwill. “The diamond Royal Crown on her ash blond hair was bewitchingly becoming.” The Crown Prince was, in spite of his cold and sober nature, so thrilled by his good fortune that he actually gave expression to it.

After the ceremony, there was a great banquet in the Rittersaal, where, according to tradition, the generals, Count Brühl and von der Marwitz,

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brought in the first courses, while chamberlains and Court ladies waited on the table until the royal family had offered the first toast. Then the courtiers withdrew to the marshal's table for their own repast. After dinner, the so-called torch dance took place in the White Room. This dance was led by eighteen ministers of state in couples, each bearing a wax taper in the form of a flambeau. The King led the bride, the Crown Prince the two Queens—his mother and the widow of Frederic the Great. Then followed the rest of the Princes and Princesses with their courtiers.

Louise and her sister, whose wedding was celebrated on December 26th, danced the waltz which had been forbidden up to then at the Prussian Court, and they danced it with so much spirit and grace that the King and all the gentlemen were delighted. Sides were taken among the beholders as to which Princess deserved the prize. The Queen, however, was greatly scandalised at the "indecentcy" of the dance, especially so because it was her daughters-in-law who had introduced it. She sternly forbade her own daughters to indulge in the

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waltz and carefully turned her back so as to avoid seeing the dancers. The revels lasted late. The guests did not depart until after the newly married pair had withdrawn to their private apartments and "Oberhofmeisterin"¹ von Voss had shown to every witness of the wedding the garter of the Crown Princess.

During the nuptial ceremony, all classes of the population were admitted to the great rooms adjoining the Rittersaal, and many people had gathered to admire the new Crown Princess. The King had given orders that "everyone possessing a whole coat" should be let in. And then he himself pressed into the crowd with his tall broad figure which had taken on breadth with the years. The King had to worm his way through the human mass with the lady he was escorting—the widow of Frederic the Great. He made good use of his left elbow while he drew along the dowager with his right. "Don't be embarrassed, children," he called out to the citizen crowd, "the father of the wedding must not make himself broader than the bridal pair."

¹ There does not seem to be an exact English equivalent for this title—the lady at the head of the queen's household. "Mistress of Ceremonies" is, perhaps, the nearest term.

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The Crown Prince, in consideration of the war, had countermanded the proposed illuminations. He had privately suggested to the Berlin people that the money allotted for the illuminations could be better employed in helping the war widows and orphans. This was done; the Court gave its share and the receipts from the gala performance in the theatre were turned into the same fund.

From the very moment of her entry into Berlin, Louise was popular as no previous Queen of Prussia had been since the charming Sophie Charlotte, the wife of Frederic I. At first there was criticism on one point only—namely the composition of the household, as this consisted almost entirely of Mecklenburgers. “Oberhofmeisterin” Mme. von Voss owed her appointment to the circumstance that she was related to the Countess Ingeheim, a morganatic wife of the King. The two Fräuleins von Viereck, Henriette and Doris, were appointed first and second maids of honour. Gossip said that one of them had also been the King’s mistress. Major von Massow was court marshal and Herr von Schilden chamberlain to the

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Crown Princess. Formerly, he had been chamberlain to Prince Ferdinand, brother to Frederic the Great and father of Louis Ferdinand, who plays a part in the narrative.

Such appointments naturally were not popular. But Louise's sympathetic nature soon overcame all discontent. One reason why she commanded approval was her evidently happy family life. This was something that had long been lacking at the Prussian Court. Nothing like it had existed under the last two sovereigns. On the contrary, scenes of jealousy and scandal had been the order of the day in the entourage of the King, Louise's father-in-law. He was morganatically married twice—first to Fräulein von Voss, later Countess Ingeheim, and second to Countess Dönhoff, who bore him two children. And then there was the Ritz, alias Countess Lichtenau, who wielded a sceptre as the King's chief mistress. She also had five children by him;—two of these were the Count and Countess von der Mark. King and Queen maintained separate Courts and their relations were strictly ceremonial.

It could not have been very easy for the young

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wife to feel at home in this world, entirely new to her inexperience. Even if all the mistresses did not live in the actual palace at the same time, still it frequently happened that there were disagreeable scenes. After 1791, the Dönhoff took refuge in Switzerland, but she returned to the King's presence from time to time like a flash of lightning, determined to win him back if possible. The following incident throws a vivid light on Prussian Court life at the time of Louise's marriage. A concert was in progress in the King's apartments at Sans Souci, in which both Mme. Ritz and her daughter, the Countess von der Mark, were taking part, when suddenly the doors were thrown open and Countess Dönhoff appeared. She had given birth to a daughter in Switzerland and she was accompanied by the two children and was determined to effect a reconciliation with their royal father. All the guests were thunderstruck as the excited woman threw herself at the King's feet and before the assembled guests made a terrible scene. He was seriously embarrassed and had difficulty in getting the unwelcome visitor taken into an adjacent room. The

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Dönhoff was so beside herself at the coolness of the reception that she threw the children into the King's arms and rushed out in a wild rage, leaped into her carriage and drove off to Berlin. Thence she went to Lausanne. At the King's request, Mme. Ritz took the children and brought them up.

Undoubtedly, during the reign of Frederic William II, life at Berlin was rather demoralised among the people at large as at Court. Marriages were broken for very trivial reasons and the standard among women was so low that "even high-born ladies descended so far as to gather young girls about them for the express purpose of corrupting them." At Court festivals, young officers, invited as guests, calmly plundered the table and behaved as they might at a village market when on service. "The officers, accustomed to idleness, had largely forgotten such military science as they might have acquired and thought of nothing but amusement. They went further than anyone else. These privileged mischief-makers simply trampled under foot everything that had been counted as sacred—religion, matrimonial fidelity—all the

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domestic virtues of elder generations. Their wives became common property to be sold and exchanged and seduced in turn." All this is stated in the confidential letters of Reichardt.

It was not strange that the young Crown Princess was regarded as a heaven-sent being—unspotted and innocent as she was. But how did she find herself in this sophisticated and tainted world? Primarily, she was helped by her sound and cheerful nature. Perhaps, too, her evident youth created a natural barrier between her and the King's vitiated circle, without Louise being conscious of the division. It is said that a salamander can pass through fire unharmed. In a like manner, Louise, protected by her ignorance and inexperience, moved unscathed through the polluted atmosphere about her. Possibly she never knew the full extent of the corruption. Before she came to her full knowledge of life, it vanished with the death of those chiefly responsible for its presence. For her a new life dawned, life as she understood it, life in harmony with her type, for it was she herself who stamped her own personality upon it.

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But in the early stages of her married life even she only just escaped a tragedy, as events proved. In spite of her modesty and reserve, she was not at all averse to the gay extravagance and smart festivals of her new world. On the contrary, she took keen pleasure in them. She came from buoyant South Germany—from the Rhineland, where the blood flows more quickly in the veins, where pastimes and amusements are enjoyed freely, where there is a greater relish in life itself than in the North. Louise had a passion for dancing—a passion not invariably pardoned when it was indulged in during hard times. She liked to have her dancing admired and frequently encouraged entertainments in which she was cast for the rôle of a dancer. This was one of her small weaknesses, perhaps rather a weakness characteristic of the epoch. For in other Courts too—Hanover, Darmstadt, Weimar, and in the Court of Napoleon—there were frequent dramatic representations in which Princesses participated. Then, too, Louise's predecessor in public favour, Queen Sophie Charlotte, had done the same thing. Her fêtes and masquer-

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ades had been famous. When the Carnival came, the young Crown Princess threw herself into its frolics with Rhineland abandon. As early as 1794, Carnival had become a brilliant occasion at the Prussian Court. The monotony of the Court of Frederic William II was a reason for a double enjoyment of all dancing entertainments.

Yes, Louise danced inordinately, and at least in the opinion of her mistress of ceremony and of other puritanic people, she danced far more than was becoming for a young wife. But it really was a good fortune for her that she had this distraction; she needed it. After her marriage, she greatly missed the maternal love of her grandmother and the intimacy with her brothers and sisters. They had always been very close friends. Then, though she was attached to her husband—both from a sense of duty and from the natural rectitude of an unspoiled heart—still Frederic William was not really congenial to her. During their engagement, she had tried to draw him on to intellectual interests. For she herself was extraordinarily capable of cultivation, and she longed to fill out

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the gaps in her education as well as she could. But her craft foundered on the rocks of Frederic William. His literary interest was confined to sentimental romances, robber tales and books about horses and uniforms. He was entirely ignorant of music, and could applaud nothing but military marches, Turkish music and dances. It was surprising that he occasionally liked to hear Louise's little songs. Possibly this aversion to music dated from the time when he was forced as a child to attend the almost daily concerts established by his father. For art, he had not the slightest comprehension and his knowledge of painting was confined to military pictures that he regarded from one point of view only. The rough sketches of his youth were nothing but caricatures of soldiers. Uniforms and all that was connected with the career of an officer—*except war*—interested him greatly. But for anything intellectual he had not the slightest concern.

Also, his sentiments ran in quite a different channel than did those of his wife. As a result of his excessive reserve, it was not possible for him, in spite of his affection and love, to show

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his tenderness for Louise as warmly as her enthusiastic nature craved. In the early days she felt very isolated. Her mood is very evident in a letter to her brother George, written on February 14th, 1794, after the departure of her relations from Berlin. At the moment it was George whom she missed the most.

“There is nothing equal to the pain caused by thy departure. I cannot realise that I must live so far from thee, and yet the reality is forced on me—[a reality] that makes me feel all the bitterness of this thought. The sense of emptiness in my house is really indescribable—especially dreadful is breakfast-time. I sit so lonely by my window, missing the pleasant talk with thee, best George, and I busy myself with thinking where my dear travellers are and despatch after them a thousand good wishes for their welfare, repose and contentment.

“Yesterday was a hard day for me. I was indescribably melancholy and sad—no one of my circle was cheerful and, out of respect for me, no one had the heart to talk much, so that dinner passed in deadly silence. As we took

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our places, I thought my tears would choke me when I saw none of my kin. I had to repress them, because tears may be misunderstood. Enough of this, or I shall begin to howl again and that would be untimely. Beloved boy, in my thoughts I press thee to my sorrowful heart and assure thee that I love thee more than my life."

It is plain that Louise had not yet adapted herself either to her marriage or to her surroundings. The palace of Unter den Linden had been put in order for her by Frederic William II, who was really attached to his daughter-in-law. It was a large house—about twenty-five rooms, of which ten were the private apartments of the young pair. In this big, rather bare and cold apartment, Louise felt, at first, very forlorn. Her writing cabinet, her bed and dressing rooms were really comfortable, but nothing else was. In these she lived by preference. Occasionally she was summoned to the Queen and obliged to bear her company at table. The old King was rarely there with his wife. These meals were not at all to Louise's taste, for, at the outset, the Queen did not care for her daughter-in-law

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and the latter was not attracted to the Queen. Later, the relations between them became more friendly, although Louise never lost her dread of Thursdays and Sundays when the Queen held her Court. On these occasions, Louise had to keep herself carefully under control. It was deadly dull and tedious because the Queen held to the strictest old-fashioned etiquette. Luckily, Frederica and Prince Louis lived near at hand in the "little palace." "Sometimes we went to them and sometimes they came to us, but we were frequently together," wrote Mme. Voss in her diary. "Together, we went to opera, theatre, concerts and balls—to soirées at the houses of the various ministers and to the hospitable Bellevue of Prince Louis Ferdinand. Frequently both Princesses almost danced themselves to death."

But the influence of her junior sister was not invariably good for Louise. Frederica was much more superficial and, as she was only sixteen, was often youthfully careless and inconsiderate. As a consequence of her own intellectual loneliness, Louise was immensely grateful for the least sign of amiability or flattery and

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for the least little personal attention. And so it happened that, in the spring of 1794, she became more intimate with the handsome Prince Louis Ferdinand than was considered proper for a young wife or was approved by etiquette. At the time he was something of a hero, besides being a general favourite and always with a reputation for gallantry. He had made the acquaintance of the sisters in the previous year, at the camp before Mayence, and—regular ladies' man as he was—Louis Ferdinand had been much attracted by both young girls. Ferderica was not blind to his observation. She wrote to her sister Therese of Thurn and Taxis: "Prince Louis Ferdinand stares at us both. He is very charming."

He was not only very charming but also one of the most dangerous men of his time. Women flocked around him. He had love adventures everywhere. He had not appeared at the wedding of the Crown Princess although he had been expected, because, as he told his sister, "he could not bear to leave the army and the Viscountess von Contade" with whom at the moment he had a liaison. But on the occasion

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of the Crown Princess's birthday, March 10th, 1794, he appeared at Court. "He had grown taller and handsomer." According to the latest fashion, his hair was not powdered, and fell in waves over his forehead. His travelling garb was most elegant and he looked so inimitable [*eigenartig*] that even his sister hardly recognised him. But she was not the only person to note his beauty and to feel the extraordinary charm that the Prince shed about him. Sensitive as Louise was to all beauty and nobility, with her Rhineland simplicity, she was at once attracted by the man's personality, the more so as he evidently took pains to make an impression upon her. Louis Ferdinand was hot-headed and passionate—a fascinating trifler, a seducer. He had known many women and none had been able to resist him. Besides his virile beauty, he had a geniality that simply carried feminine hearts by storm. The Prince at once grasped the fact that Louise was not exactly in her right place by the side of that stiff, clumsy man who seemed scarcely conscious of his wife's bewitching beauty or was too shy and awkward to tell her what he felt. In high-strung, unbridled



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From an engraving by F. W. Nettleing

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fashion, the Prince tried to reap advantage from the circumstance and to make court to the young wife, who, in his opinion, was not so very happy.

Encouraged, perhaps, by Frederica, Louise accepted this impassioned homage, albeit somewhat shyly. It was a new experience for her and she took it under the guise of a friendship which did not need concealment. In so doing she thought she was in her right and ignored rigid rules, as she was, indeed, inclined to do in all her ordinary social actions. For instance, she and Frederica would go driving without attendance; she would accept invitations without consulting her husband or Countess von Voss, and would receive visitors unauthorized by the Court. Then again, she would dance the whole night through, regardless of her health and the Crown Prince's warnings. She did not protect herself at all, while at the same time she possessed little physical resistance. She caught cold easily and often suffered from sore throat. After a ball she was completely exhausted and frequently feverish, and she would be obliged to lie in bed until noon. But no warnings had the

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slightest effect upon her. Her youthful desire for amusement had to work out its own salvation.

The consequence of all this was that she brought criticism upon herself and not at Court alone. When the Berlin public heard that, in addition to her disregard of formalities, she was not indifferent to the fickle Prince Louis Ferdinand, they, too, began to be dissatisfied with the Crown Princess, whom they had been quite ready to idolize. Such disapproval seemed well grounded when she let the Prince visit her frequently in the mornings—to discuss, as he alleged, the plans for a fête or masquerade costumes. Their relations certainly became very friendly and intimate without Louise finding in them the slightest impropriety.

It was not at all the same thing, however, with the susceptible young man. His friendship was based on other intentions and when he found that his advances were not to be crowned with success, he tried to persuade Frederica to be an intermediary with her sister. What was the result? A few months later, Frederica herself fell a victim to the almost irresistible charm that might have conquered Louise, had she not

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had a good adviser and true friend at her side in the good old Countess Voss, who was not blind to the intentions of Prince Louis Ferdinand. She was an experienced observer in the ways of Courts, but she did not then possess the complete confidence of her young mistress. She writes: "The difference of age was so great between her and me and then she was naturally reticent in character and possessed, fortunately and rightfully, I must say, a fund of reserve that kept her from speaking freely to persons whom she did not know."

Had Louise's grandmother been at the time in Berlin, the young wife would have told her everything and taken shelter in her arms from the dangers of the capital. It was not easy for her to write freely, because she was afraid that not even her grandmother would understand. But a letter to her brother George—April, 1794—young and responsive as he was, does reveal much. "Ah, a few words are such a consolation to me!" she wrote. "I do need it—Berlin is much bigger than Darmstadt, there are many more people of all types—of that I am well aware—the good is not always understood.

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Believe me, I speak from experience; still one must not cease to be good. This is and remains my principle."

Before she had arrived at this sage point of view, it had, indeed, cost her many sacrifices. Tears, many tears, flowed in the early months of the marriage. Louise was slow to accept the fact that her joy of living, her gay temperament, must be curbed, and that she could not live as unfettered in the Court of Berlin as had the little Mecklenburg Princess in Darmstadt. "There is general dissatisfaction with her," wrote Countess Voss. Even the King, who was very fond of Louise, was angry with her and had Fräulein Viereck tell her that she must mend her ways. He advised the Crown Prince to show his wife that "we are accustomed to command obedience from our wives."

Louise did not, however, need strenuous methods. She speedily reached the conclusion that her husband was her best friend and she intimated to Frau von Voss that "no one should possess her full confidence, no one should be her adviser but her husband." For as Louise came to realise, he really loved her. Instead of re-

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proaching the inexperienced young wife with the faults she had committed, he defended her staunchly against both King and Queen. In this time of uncertainty, he was her loyal friend and Louise recognised his worth. The temporary intoxication caused by the attentions of Louis Ferdinand passed when he became equally devoted to her sister, who did not repulse him. Louise did not sympathise with the frivolity of her "English Frederica," but her affection never wavered. No one understood better than she how difficult it was to resist a man as fascinating as Louis Ferdinand. She stood firmly by her sister, whose intrigue with the Prince naturally excited the greatest disapproval in the Court circles, although it was well known how little sympathy she had found in her husband. Prince Louis of Prussia was entirely indifferent as to whether his wife gave her love to another man or not.

In any case, by April, 1794, the idyl of Louise and Louis Ferdinand was entirely ended, when the Crown Prince's family moved, for a time, to Potsdam. "The disturbing element" of the young household was thus swept out of the way

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and the old Countess declared triumphantly: "To the Crown Prince alone belongs the credit that she [Louise], in a moment of danger, when alien influence threatened to press in between him and her, was protected from it by his trustworthiness and firmness."

Perhaps, he simply called Louis Ferdinand "a vexatious fellow" as was his wont when he could not endure a person. He was then very short with them and let his dislike be seen plainly. He did not like many people about him, and the bustle of the Court was most distasteful to him even as a young man. But, unfortunately he could not long enjoy his quiet life at Potsdam after he and his young wife, so to say, found each other. There for the first time the two seemed to understand each other. During those days, Frederic William wrote to his friend, Major Schack, in the happiest mood: "We are living here very quietly and, for my part, very agreeably. Berlin I do not regret at all and I never liked it here so much.—God grant that on our return to Berlin, no misunderstandings and ill-natured gossip will come to disturb our domestic peace."

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Louise called the six weeks spent in Potsdam the very happiest of her life. They passed very quickly. In May, the Crown Prince had to go again into the field. After the second division of Poland there was, in March, 1794, a revolt led by Kosciusko. Russia, Austria and Prussia united to crush the Polish rebels. The uprising was not completely suppressed until October, 1794, when Warsaw was taken by Suwarow.

This first separation between Louise and Frederic William was a hard blow to both. The Crown Prince was very unhappy and he had also no desire to take the field. He said to Schack: "This seems like the second part of the French Revolution." But there was no alternative. The King gave his orders and in mid-May, the two brothers joined the army. Louise, who had been established in Sans Souci, was left in tears. Her first letter to her husband is the best proof of their intimacy at that time. Such expressions of love and passion are rarely to be found in the correspondence of Princesses to their spouses, though possibly such might occur in letters to a lover. In the Court circles there was, as a rule, more epistolary coolness.

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"My dear and beloved friend," wrote Louise, May 15th, 1794, "a pen shall now tell you what my mouth has already said a thousand times—that I love thee unspeakably. How hard it is not to have thee with me. Solitary and alone, I give myself up to my sorrow. My one consolation is to sit on the sofa in the same spot where thou hast been accustomed to sit. O God! If thou couldst see me—see thy unhappy wife, how she sighs over thy departure, how miserable she is and forsaken! Tears are my only consolation, but how bitter! . . . Do not forget me, my true friend. Remember thy Louise who lives for thee and who is wretched without thee. . . . By God, I swear to thee, there is no love like that which I feel for thee—not the love for father and mother, not for brothers and sisters." She adds in German: "Thou art my All, angel of my heart. In thee I find my fortune. Without thee everything is nothing and I am unhappy. . . . I beg thee, for God's sake, answer me frankly whether you are really convinced of my pure love for thee."

That Louise let her feelings run away with her in this fashion and, without prudery or



PRINCE LOUIS FERDINAND

From an engraving by F. W. Meyer

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shyness, expressed what was in her heart, was in the insincere Court another cause for criticism, but was certainly to her credit. For her, there was only one way to be happy—to follow her instincts. Besides, she was the giver, not the receiver. It made her a thousand times happier to be kindly than to receive kindness, although she was not unresponsive and very grateful for every warm word and the slightest attention. She would be beside herself with joy if the ordinarily taciturn, word-chary Crown Prince told her how much he cared for her and how much he needed her companionship. "Such an assurance," she wrote to her brother, "makes one really happy, especially if one has only a single desire—to make a man happy."

In September, before the war ended, Frederic William returned. He was not satisfied with his part in the enterprise, nor with the campaign in general. The King had almost invariably shoved him aside, in order, as he alleged, not to endanger the succession. Possibly, Frederic William II perceived that his son was by no means a military genius and not suited to a position of command. When the siege of War-

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saw was abruptly raised, the Crown Prince approved, but he felt as though he would die of shame at the ignominious retreat.

The news of his unexpected return transported Louise to an almost insane joy. "I do not know where my head is and what I am doing," she wrote. "A joyful tremor seized me on reading your letter, my breath was short, very short—O God, what a joy is to be mine! I tremble in arm and limb when I think of it. —A thousand times I have re-read the passage of the 7th. The only question that disturbs me is 'What day will he come?' I implore thee, write me the day thou art due, for I must know it or I die, or at least I shall be frightened to death lest thou come as a surprise."

And, on September 21st, he is really there. Louise's first confinement was expected in a month and she was happy at having her husband on hand. She rejoiced over the coming child but thought it so extraordinary and even so comical that she should be a mother that she wrote to George: "And thou, dear Brother George, wilt thou rejoice and be merry at the thought of Louise having a baby?"

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Joy, however, turned to sorrow. On October 7th, through an accident, the Crown Princess gave birth to a dead little girl. Under the impression that their mistress was out, the servants admitted a stranger to see the palace. Meeting a strange man on the stairs, Louise was so frightened that she fell down the steps. A miscarriage was the result. It was not until a year later that her anticipations were fulfilled. On October 15th, 1795, she bore her first son who was to be later, King Frederic William IV. She was indescribably happy and nearly a year of quiet family life followed this event.

Aloof from the distractions and official fêtes customary in Court life, the young pair stayed quietly at Potsdam or at Paretz, which last palace had lately been acquired. By this time, Louise had grown accustomed to her marriage and had learned to understand the Crown Prince better. Then from time to time she saw her own family, visited her father and seemed contented with her lot. Her interest centred on her child and she acted like a mother of the bourgeois class. She was entirely absorbed in her baby's weal and woe. And this was true

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not only with her first born, but also with her other children. As she once expressed herself to Professor Heidenreich in Leipzig, she wanted, above all, "to bring them up to be beneficent friends to humanity." "My care is devoted to my children. If God preserves them to us, then he preserves my best treasures which no one can rob me of."

When travelling, she wrote to the nurses and governesses how she wished the children to be treated, with cautions that they were not to be spoiled. To the children, too, she sent long, detailed letters and tried to share in their little joys and sorrows. The result was that they all lavished doting affection on this mother who had so much to give them.

The Crown Prince lived with Louise like a prosperous, private gentleman. He preferred his home to any other place, for he felt at ease in his family circle as he did not elsewhere. He hated the empty, hollow gossip of the courtiers and the stiff ceremonies. His pedantic temperament caused him to arrange for a uniform life, in which every hour had its allotted task. Louise laughed a little over this, as when

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she wrote her brother George that they went to bed with the cocks and hens and got up with them. For the Crown Prince rose every day at six, and in the early days of their marriage, at least when they were in the country, Louise felt bound to do the same. Frequently she came into conflict with her mistress of ceremonies, Countess von Voss, by simple methods of life, where etiquette was ignored. The Countess tried her best to maintain in all details the traditional Court ceremonial. She did not succeed with Louise and still less with Frederic William. He called her "Dame Etiquette." The latter was especially scandalised because the young husband would come to his wife's apartments unannounced. One day she pointed out to him that this was quite contrary to Court usage. He replied: "Good, I will conform. Announce me to my spouse and ask if I may have the honour of speaking with her royal highness, the Crown Princess. Give her my compliments and my hopes that she will kindly accede to this request."

Mme. Voss was delighted with the result of her education. Most formally she betook her-

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self to the Crown Princess to announce the approaching visit of his royal highness. What was her astonishment when she found the Crown Prince in Louise's rooms before her! He had entered by another door and he called out to the mistress of ceremonies with a laugh: "See, dear Voss, my wife and I, we see and speak with each other unannounced as often as we desire."

Frederic William was economical and simple and tried to avoid for himself and his family all pretence. In marked contrast to his father, who was extremely elegant in his dress and squandered money on his mistresses—who were, in the main, very ordinary characters—the Crown Prince lived only for his family. When he was sixteen, Mirabeau said of him: "He is awkward, but he has a certain impressiveness. He is no courtier but he is true. . . . He is hard and rough almost to rawness. . . . Perhaps this young man has a great future."

In his simplicity, Frederic William could not have much respect for his father. Nay, more, he hated and despised him and made no secret of his aversion. Frederic the Great on the

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other hand he admired above everything. His great uncle had, indeed, once said of him: "He will be like me." But neither Mirabeau nor Frederic the Great were right. Frederic William neither had a great future nor did he possess the intellect and genius of Frederic. That, at least, he realised and knew that he could never be like his most distinguished ancestor. When at his accession he was asked whether he would take the title of Frederic or Frederic William, he is said to have replied: "Frederic William. Frederic is for me unattainable."

The old man always remained to him a vivid memory. Frequently he had talked with him in the park of Sans Souci. Then Frederic William was but a child. Once he encountered Frederic the Great unexpectedly. The King at once began to ask him about history and mathematics. "I had to speak French to him," related Frederic William III to his biographer, Eylert, in later years. "Then he took La Fontaine's *Fables* from his pocket and made me translate one. It chanced to be one that I had read with my sister and it was easy for me. This I told the King when he praised my

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facility. His solemn face lighted up. 'That's right, dear Fritz—always honourable and upright! Never want to seem more than thou art and always be more than thou seemest.' ” This warning made an indelible impression on the young Prince. Quibbling and lying were even in later years very repulsive to him.

Yet it was just this simple uprightness that made him unfit for the post that awaited him, especially at an epoch when Western Europe was seething with unrest, and when Prussia had to contend against a foe whom only a genius could have met successfully. All statesmen agree on this point. In a letter to Baron Thugut, November 6th, 1797, Prince Reuss, the Austrian ambassador, writes, in reference to the Crown Prince—"His attitude is timid, he is very reserved and cannot express himself easily. His intimates say that he is very undecided; and this assertion seems well founded. Among the various causes to which this indecision can be ascribed, it seems to me probable that the Prince, who really has a sound intellect, feels with every day, his lack of education and he will always feel it. . . . When this education



FREDERIC WILLIAM III

From a mezzotint by H. Sintzenich

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was considered complete, he was made to attend cabinet meetings. He was greatly bored, never showing the slightest interest in the affairs discussed. . . . When he accompanied the King into the field, he was simply a show figure and evinced no ambition to distinguish himself. . . . His greatest pre-occupation is the drilling of his regiment—and in that he is successful. . . . He maintains an iron discipline and loves the army which he would like to enlarge.”

Many years later, Baron vom Stein, then in Prague, wrote to Princess Wilhelm, “I honour the King for his religious simplicity, his real love of goodness, I love him for his beneficent character and pity him for living in an age when this mildness, this integrity has simply brought about his fall and in which only one thing is needful to retrieve himself—an overwhelming military genius allied to a relentless egotism, able to cry down and stamp upon everything and use corpses on which to be enthroned.”

And these were exactly the characteristics not possessed by Frederic William. As Crown Prince, he counted it a good fortune—apart from the campaigns in which he participated—

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not to have to bother about politics and state business. His life with Louise was quiet and even. At Potsdam, the tenor was particularly monotonous, especially if no social occasions and fêtes were forced upon him. His horse, his regiment and a game of bowls were all—sufficient distractions for him, especially during his younger years. He cared nothing for the chase,—finding it almost as rough and hateful as war. On the other hand, he would ride with Louise for hours in the vicinity of Potsdam. She was an expert horsewoman and loved riding partly because when her husband was riding by her side, he found his voice more freely. In some such moments of close and intimate companionship, he would remark, “Thank God, that thou art again my wife.” And when Louise asked, “Am I not always that?” he replied with evident regret, “No, frequently, thou hast to be Crown Princess.” Painfully shy as he was, his hatred of publicity was to him terribly embarrassing.

Neglected as his general education had been, he still was well versed in French, both in speech and in writing. Indeed he was less

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embarrassed in that than in German in which his sentences were abrupt and abbreviated, while his French was fluent and fairly easy. But in many subjects his training was very defective. His father had never troubled about him, giving far more attention to his illegitimate than to his legitimate offspring. On the very day that the Crown Prince was born, Mme. Ritz gave birth to a son of the King who became Count Alexander von der Mark. And the father of the two infants was chiefly interested in the bastard who died in his 9th year and was bitterly mourned. The King missed this child so grievously that in one of the séances instituted by Mme. Ritz and Bischoffwerder he called up its spirit. The little ghost appeared promptly at the call, but simply to remind the King never to desert its mother. And Frederic William kept the promise.

With such a father and a superficial mother, entirely engrossed in her own affairs, the royal children were left to servants and instructors who were not, invariably, virtuous and well-trained. They all grew up without love or affection. When the sixteen year old boy came

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under the supervision of Count Karl Brühl, a clever man, it was too late. Taciturn and awkward the Crown Prince was and was destined so to remain. Brühl was quite unable to make him either polished or socially at ease. The good-natured Köckritz, successor as adjutant to Schack, was a pleasant genial person, not at all adapted to inspire self confidence into a weak individual like his young charge, for he himself was lacking in that quality.

Nevertheless, in the companionship of this ungainly reserved husband, Louise really succeeded in building up happiness for herself without changing his character. After the first few months, she learned to adapt herself to her legal mate. A woman less inclined to yield might have been very miserable. But Louise bridged over the uneven places in her daily routine with a full measure of cheerfulness, and of consideration for human weakness. Her husband's idiosyncrasies were accepted without friction; and yet he was not always easy to handle. The confidential *thou* adopted by the young couple for their private usage, helped

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them to mutual understanding. Such an address between royalties was hitherto unknown in the Prussian Court. The King was excessively astonished when he first noticed it. "What do I hear? Dost thou address the Crown Princess as *Du*?" "It happens from excellent reasons," was the curt reply and when the King persisted in his question, the son added, "With *Du*, one knows where one is. With *Sie*, there is always doubt as to whether it is capitalized." x

Then they were brought nearer together by family sorrows and anxieties,—the children's illnesses and deaths among their kinsfolk. The end of 1796 and the beginning of the following year were sad for both Louise and her husband. In December, Prince Louis, Frederica's husband, died of quinsy sore throat at the age of twenty-five. The Crown Prince was so shocked at his brother's death that he, too, was brought almost to the brink of death by the same malady. Louise did not leave him for a moment. She was a tender nurse and her presence by his bed during the night was a great comfort to the invalid. Finally on January 3rd, 1797, to her infinite relief, the crisis passed. She wrote to

x *Sie* = she

Sie = you

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George, "To know that my husband was in danger and to see him suffer was frightful. Never shall I forget those days of misery."

A few days later, died Elizabeth Christiana, widow of Frederic the Great and at about the same time, the King began to fail. "I am getting on," he said to Bischoffwerder, when he heard of the dowager's death. He was attacked by dropsy. The great strong man pined visibly and was ordered to take the baths at Pyrmont. Off he travelled to that fashionable watering place—as it then was—accompanied by the Countess Lichtenau,—while the Queen stayed in Freienwalde, a modest little resort. The widowed Princess Louis—Frederica—was in the King's party, and a few weeks later, the Crown Prince and his wife were ordered to join the invalid at Pyrmont. This was just after a second son had been born to them on March 22nd, 1797—Prince William, later Emperor William I.

In Pyrmont, there were some wretched days to be lived through for Louise, but she could not refuse to go thither when the King willed her presence. The Lichtenau held formal Court

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and was treated by the royal Princes (more than twenty were gathered there) with all honour. Her husband, Chamberlain Ritz—the most contemptible creature in the royal circle—was petted and fêted. All this was very distasteful to Louise, but neither she nor her husband dared to run counter to the King. She was obliged to assist at a reception given by the mistress,—an incident described by Dampmartin,—tutor to the latter's son,—“The Queen, Crown Prince and his wife, as well as the other royal Princes and Princesses were terribly chagrined at the humiliating obligation to be guests of a woman whose mere presence wounded them to the quick. The Crown Prince could not conceal his discomfort. He looked askance at his beloved mother and then again at his adored wife as if he did not believe it were possible that he was with them in the magnificent suite of his father's mistress. Nothing could have been more antagonistic to his two ruling passions—his economy and his sense of dignity. Young, upright and rather unsocial, it was almost impossible for him to hide his profound annoyance. The brilliantly beautiful Crown

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Princess seemed reserved and was evidently uneasy at her husband's agitation. Princess Frederica, her sister, had laid aside her mourning for the first time and was gracefully resplendent. The Princes and Princesses were quite unable to conceal their annoyance and embarrassment." Happily, these wretched days passed quickly.

The old King was slightly benefited by the waters, however, and his son was free to return to Potsdam. Shortly after the return of the Court, Louise and Frederic William were relieved from its ennui by a trip to Paretz on the Havel—a very simple castle arranged just according to their taste. There was nothing elaborate, no silk furniture, no rich carpets, no gold and silver plate for the table. Everything was rustic and plain. At the first view, it was not impressive, but Louise preferred it to all their other dwellings, because she could live as she wished. Here she rested in the happy days when she was wearied with too much dancing in Berlin, and, later, when fatigued by sorrow and misfortune, she felt the need of the solitude of Paretz. "I must," she said, "relax the strings of my mind for some hours a day and then

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stretch them again so that they hold the right sound. I am at my best alone, but not in a room, rather in the silent shadows of lovely free nature."

It was a pity that this good fortune could not last for the pair. But the King's improvement passed. It was scarcely a fortnight before they were called back to Berlin. The care-free family life of the young couple had come to an end for ever. Frederic William II lay at death's door. His dropsy caused him unspeakable suffering and the end was expected daily. At this epoch, too, Louise was forced to see much that was ugly and to endure painful experiences.

The old man established himself in the marble Palace at Potsdam, while his spouse, the Queen, lived in Berlin. The Countess and her friends would have been pleased to have him abdicate. Then she would have taken him off to Italy, but the Crown Prince strenuously opposed the suggestion. The dying sovereign was completely in the control of his mistress. During his last days, he saw no one but her friends and a number of French *émigrés* introduced by her. Even his son and wife had to

Marmor Palais" is the name of the palace

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ask permission from the Lichtenau or the Chamberlain, in order to visit the invalid. And this was not always granted. He would sit in his room lighted by shaded candles, stuck in alabaster vases, his swollen, dropsical feet covered by rugs and cushions. The unsteady eyes of the dying man, deeply sunk in the pallid countenance, roved from one object to another. No air was admitted and he could scarcely speak. At his side sat the Countess Lichtenau and the young Marquise von Nadaillac who had to entertain the King while the former stroked him. The two children of the Dönhoff played noisily about the room. This did not prevent a reader from reading aloud a comedy of Molière which was supposed to divert the sufferer.

Typical of the period was the fact that all kinds of quacks and charlatans were admitted to the Court. They did not attempt to work miracles on the invalid, but they exhibited necromancy and chemical experiments. The "Rosenkreuzers" encouraged him in his mysticism. The King had quarrelled with all his family whom he characterised as freethinkers

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and atheists. It was only after the illness of his sons that he had resumed relations with his own people. But the influence of the quacks—encouraged by the Countess and Bischoffwerder—continued to be very potent. One of these, Bergrat Clemens, advised the invalid to breathe the effluvia of unborn calves. The Ritz at once had cushions made from the intestines of calves and the King had to lie on these. Magnetizers, charlatans and doctors alternated in attendance on the King and all gained admission through the all powerful friend or the equally potent Mme. Ritz. Naturally his condition grew worse and worse. He was finally so weak and so nervous that the popping of a cork frightened him and he had to be carried fainting into his room.

The end came on November 15th, 1797. The King bade farewell to his family in the presence of the Lichtenau. He could scarcely speak and was almost suffocated. The Queen fell weeping on the neck of the mistress and thanked her for the care given to the King during the illness. But the Crown Prince stood gloomily by and regarded the Lichtenau with contempt. Then

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the invalid became so angry that he refused to see any member of his family again. Even Louise was refused access to the sick-room.

It was a painful death struggle and the King died alone,—alone in the midst of hirelings just as, sixty years earlier, death had come to Louis XIV. No kinsman, no friend, no clergy were present. Only the Chamberlain Ritz, the most abject of souls, and two servants. Even Countess Lichtenau was not by the bedside during the last hour. She was herself ill—an illness caused, it was said, by a scene with the Crown Prince. She heard the news of the end as she was looking out of the window from which she could see the guard march slowly to the castle to hold the death watch. Then she realised that all was over. At almost the same moment, she was arrested, an arrest that had been ordered by her best friend, Minister Haugwitz. Col. von Zastrow and Major Kleist conducted the prisoner to her dwelling in the *Kavalierhaus* where she remained confined until her trial began in the year 1798.

CHAPTER III

THE YOUNG QUEEN ON THE THRONE

The debts of Frederic William II—The young king's economy—Elimination of the mastery of favourites and mistresses—Frederic William III's great modesty—Court festivities—The queen's pleasure in dancing and amusement—Her mental training—Her relations to poets, writers and philosophers of the period—Frau von Berg—Colonel Massenbach, her intellectual adviser—The intellectual influence of Frau von Kleist on Louise—Goethe's mother—The king's lack of interest in literature and art—The homage journey—The fisher's wife of Schwerdt—Louise's longing for unofficial life—Frederica's *mésalliance*—She is obliged to leave the court—The happy meeting—The Grand Duchess Hélène Pawlovna in Berlin—Frederic William falls in love with her.

IT was no welcome heritage that came to Frederic William III and Louise. The old King left debts amounting to many millions—a sum that the son tried to make good. On that account, he did not wish to enlarge his household and he remained with his

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family—just then increased by the birth of a child—in his old palace. He avoided everything in the way of splurge and declared, “The King will have to live on the Crown Prince’s income;” and this statement coming from Frederic William III was no empty phrase. His purpose of economical simplicity was apparent even in his dress. He abandoned expensive silk stockings and small clothes, adopting long trousers and boots. Perukes too were given up, and powdered hair was forbidden because there was a rather high tax on powder. Only the little cue and the bag were retained by the King for himself and his soldiers, and that fashion was not abandoned until 1806.

Louise, too, had naturally simple tastes in dress. Thin white muslin was most becoming to her, with her ash blond hair held together by a ribbon. A Göttingen student saw her at Cassel in 1797 and was so captivated that he wrote to a friend:—“Her figure was almost ethereal, which effect was enhanced by her light garments. Oh, this lovely woman,—this Queen! Hadst thou but seen how she won all hearts by her noble appearance!”

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At festivities, she appeared in elaborate toilettes from Paris fashioned in the mode of the day. Her own taste was exceedingly good and Berlin modistes copied what she wore to the smallest detail. Even the ribbon tied under her chin became fashionable, although, as a matter of fact, its purpose was to conceal the thickness of her neck—a defect that she disliked. And in order that the peculiarity should not be too noticeable, Frederica followed the fashion. As a rule, the sisters dressed alike,—Frederica, perhaps, more elegantly than the Queen. She was also the more graceful of the two. Later, the King was annoyed at hearing the elegance of his sister-in-law commented on and desired his wife to be as richly clad. Only he could not endure paint and powder. Yet both were then considered part of a woman's toilette. And so even the most German of all Princesses, Queen Louise, did touch up her lips and put on a little rouge.

Certainly, Louise tried to be economical, yet she over-spent. She was supposed to live as a Queen upon the income of a Crown Princess and it was not possible. There were an infinite

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number of claims upon her and, as she enjoyed giving, her budget simply melted away. She soon was deep in debt. She did not dare tell her husband, but confided her trouble to the cabinet minister Beyme. He represented the matter to the King, pointing out that the Queen could not be kept so close and Frederic William agreed that she might draw on his privy purse. He coupled the favour, however, with the request that she should keep a strict account of all expenditures.

In their domestic life, the sovereigns made little change. King and Queen had no separate households as had been usual in the Prussian Court. Frederic William III was determined to live *en famille*. On the first day of his Reign, the new ceremonial was introduced and the footman threw open the two folding doors before the King. He said ironically: "Have I grown so fat that one door no longer suffices?"

While he was still Crown Prince, he had drawn up a kind of memorial outlining a course of action exactly the opposite from that followed by his father. Above all, he wanted no mistresses or favourites as masters in the Court, no

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luxury and no extravagance in any form. His policy was a policy of peace with a strong army. Above all, he was determined not to exceed his income, for he held that the revenues belonged to the State. On this account, he avoided everything that implied an increase of the budget, but he did not venture to retrench in the official functions.

Accordingly, as soon as the six weeks Court and national mourning was over, fête followed fête. These were inevitable on account of the coronation and the homage and were very splendid. Louise enjoyed herself immensely at the balls, for she danced, as we have already seen, with infinite zest. She was not yet two and twenty, full of vitality and still care-free. She enjoyed every pleasure to the utmost. It happened once that the King, to whom all festivities were a horror, withdrew from a Court ball at one o'clock while Louise held out till six A.M. On the morrow she slept until noon, while the King reviewed his regiment in the early-morning. Sometimes, Louise drove him rather wild with her love for dancing, and he reproached her gravely, but reproaches did not help. Louise's

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joy of living was strong and the pretty young women in the new Court were just as pleasure-loving as the attractive young Queen. Louise's unquenchable gaiety was usually successful in dissipating the King's ill-humour and the depression under which he suffered.

One favourite entertainment of the period was to have fêtes with exhibitions of fancy dancing in which the Queen and the Princesses took part. That was a welcome change, for the rehearsals were especially jolly and informal. These would begin at eleven o'clock and last until four in the afternoon. All etiquette was abandoned. In the intervals, little dinners were arranged. Louise and her ladies in waiting, the Princes and the superior officers sat socially at one table with the dancing master, Telle, the leader of the orchestra, Himmel, the wardrobe director, Hirt, and the master of ceremonies, Kiesewetter. Later, Duke Karl August of Weimar took part in these rehearsals and indulged in many a jest, which added to the gaiety.

At this epoch, too, as before the death of the old King, Louise was much criticised for her absorption in mere amusements, especially as

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the affairs of Prussia were not prosperous. Her contemporaries declared that she trifled away her time and permitted herself to be surprised by the disasters that came. Heinrich von Kleist went so far as to write to his sister: "The Queen's very soul seems busied with nothing lately but amusing herself with dancing and riding." This censure is only partly fair. As a still girlish matron with a buoyant temperament, Louise's thirst for distraction was natural enough. The young King, under his new responsibilities, was a gloomy and morose companion. At that time, the Queen troubled herself little about politics. Later, as will be seen, she troubled too much and not always wisely. She certainly loved the gaieties that were attainable, but she never really lost herself in their enjoyment. We can accept her brother's testimony that she was kept true by a "high power of heart and of soul."

She made strenuous efforts to attain what intellectual cultivation she could, although in this regard she did not invariably have the instinct for choosing what was most needful for her mind. Both she and the King read, with

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enjoyment, the romances of Lafontaine. This writer lived in Halle and flooded the market with an immense number of mediocre novels with domestic themes, which had a remarkable vogue.¹ At the end of the XVIII century there was a rage for rather mawkish sentiment in fiction and in art, while immorality, pretence and hypocrisy dominated in Berlin society of all classes. At all times, men have loved contrasts and this thirst for the simple tale, without regard to the talent of the author, was an instance of this tendency. Louise followed the general drift of public taste in absorbing insipid literature. It did not injure her mental development, because she found a balance in works of a higher type, but the romances were really injurious to a weak character like that of the King. The flabby and enervating literature may well have catered to his lack of energy and vigour.

Lafontaine was richly rewarded for the amusement he had afforded to the royal pair by his

¹ August Heinrich Julius Lafontaine, b. 1758, d. 1831. His popularity was remarkable and his industry prodigious. He published more than 150 volumes *spiessburgerlich sentimentale Familienromane*, as they are termed by one critic.

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voluminous crop of tales. The King made him a canon with a good revenue. Besides that, large returns came to him from his writings and he lived so well that he became, as Varnhagen von Ense¹ expressed it, the shape of a barrel.

It was fortunate for Louise that she craved mental pabulum of a sterner type than that afforded by Lafontaine. She turned, with keen pleasure and interest, to literature of a higher character. Schiller and Jean Paul Richter gave a wholesome counterpoise to what she read with the King. Richter felt her appreciation gratefully and dedicated his *Titan* to her and her sisters. He was one of the welcome guests at Hildburghausen, where the *Singelotte* delighted to honour him. In May, 1799, he wrote, from there, to his friend Otto, "These beings [the three sisters of the Queen] love and read me, and want me to stay a week longer in order that I may meet the fourth beautiful sister, the Queen of Prussia." Louise arrived and Jean Paul became one of her greatest admirers. On the

¹ Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, b. 1785, d. 1858. Officer, diplomat, biographer and author of histories of campaigns and critical essays. He was extraordinarily versatile and prolific as a writer.

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eve of his own death, he called to mind this first meeting and wrote the words which preface this volume. They occur in his *Consoling Souvenirs* which were dedicated to Louise's brother George.

It was Schiller, however, who became the Queen's prime favourite. "Ah, did I not read him again and again, my Schiller? Why did he not come to Berlin?" she wrote from Königsberg in 1808. She and the King invited the poet to be their Court laureate, as Goethe had been to Karl August. Schiller could not, however, make up his mind to change his home. Berlin pleased him, indeed, better than Jena but he found it too dear. Louise saw all his plays regularly, but it was difficult, at least at the outset, to persuade the King to go to the theatre. His interest in the drama and in the ballet came later after Louise's death and after he had witnessed many splendid performances in London and Paris. From that period on, he was frequently to be seen in the Court box.

By means of translations, Louise gained a familiarity with the Greek tragedies. Shakespeare, too, became a pleasure to her after

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Frau von Berg had brought his writings to her knowledge. Frau von Berg and Frau von Kleist were the two chief inspirations to this side of the Queen's life. To them she owed the mental maturity and the firmness of character that she acquired—to them and to the hard blows of fate which changed her very being. No one was as intimate with her as Frau von Berg. She was a highly cultivated, clever woman, and, like Frau von Krudener, slightly inclined to mysticism. Frau von Berg was also in close touch with Baron vom Stein, later Prime Minister of Prussia. And that by itself is a proof that Louise learned much from her; while later the Frau proved a valuable adviser in political affairs.

In the division of history and philosophy, Louise read Herder. She was particularly fascinated with *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschen*, and she seldom took a journey without a Herder volume. History, too, she read with keen interest. Such works as Weiss' *Principes philosophiques, politiques et moraux* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* were in her library. The latter was in a

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French translation and this "was read and re-read until her hearing and seeing were blurred." Later, when she herself had had a frightful political experience, she interested herself in German history. She read the lectures of Professor Süvern, delivered at Königsberg. Above all, it was the founders of Germanism that thrilled her. "I am reading the Süvern lectures," she wrote to Frau von Berg, "and am as far as Charlemagne, who was really the founder of the German age. I can see him now in all his greatness, glory and valour. He attracts me, but less than Theodoric. This man was a true German and his love of justice, the integrity of his character, the depths of his sentiment, and the largeness of his heart, prove it. The character of Charlemagne bears a Frank imprint which always frightens me a little."

An exceptional adviser to Louise was the brother-in-law of her intimate friend, Frau von Kleist,—Col. von Massenbach. He had an enthusiastic admiration for the Queen and wanted to make her a personage of intellectual significance. He understood her temperament, and knew that everything that she read fell on

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fruitful soil. And so much the more he was annoyed at the failure to influence the king. It was due to Massenbach that Louise began to read the great English historians—Hume, Robertson and Gibbon. His sister-in-law, Marie von Kleist (née Gualtieri), was the influence that turned the Queen in the direction of Jean Paul Richter and to the poet of the “Arminius cycle,”—Herman von Kleist, the nephew of Louise. That he received a pension from the Queen on this account is, however, an error as is shown by the latest Kleist researches.

As poet, Goethe came later into Louise's intellectual life, while his mother never forgot that she had known the Queen as a young girl. When Louise was at Frankfort in 1799, Frau Goethe was invited to the house of her sister, the Princess of Thurn and Taxis, where the Queen was herself a guest. Frau Goethe was greatly touched by this attention and wrote to her son: “A great honour has been shown me and one that I did not expect. Through her brother, the Queen had me invited to come to her; the Prince came at noon to me and dined at my little table—at six o'clock, he fetched me in a

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carriage with two lackeys (in attendance) to the Taxis palace. The Queen talked with me about old times—remembered the various pleasures in my former house, the good pancakes, etc. Dear God! What an impression that made on people—in coffee houses and taverns—in big and little social circles—it was the chief subject of conversation for a few days,—how the Queen had had the Frau Councillor fetched by the hereditary Prince of Mecklenburg, and how I was bothered to relate everything just as it happened. In a word I had a nimbus around my head that was very becoming to me!”

It goes without saying that the Queen did not find any too much time to devote to serious study. Her children came rapidly and she busied herself continually with their weal and their woe. Then in addition to the reading that she managed to do, she wrote voluminously. Her correspondence with her sisters, her husband, her children, her friends, with the Czar, with various artists and authors, fills volumes. She wrote up her diary every day besides composing little essays and she noted down everything that she saw and heard. Her official duties, and

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especially the many journeys that she felt obliged to take with her husband at the beginning of his reign, absorbed her more than she desired, while all her intellectual life had to be snatched apart from Frederic William III. Had Louise not been a bond to hold together the circle in Berlin, intellectual activities would have been slight indeed in the young King's Court.

In Louise's family there was a fear lest she should mentally deteriorate in her husband's companionship. She herself knew, only too well, what might happen if she did not shake herself free and strive to attain a certain mental standard. "I still do not know enough," she wrote to the hereditary Prince George. And after she had been married several years, "If it continues like this soon I shall not know whether London is in England or Germany." For that reason she took pains to develop her faculties as far as possible.

Louise's first experience as Queen, was to see something of her own new world by a journey through East Prussia and Silesia to receive homage—in "real Prussia" as she phrased it—

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Dantzic, Königsberg, Warsaw, Breslau. The whole region was covered by carriage in five weeks, over roads by no means perfect and under conditions by no means always comfortable. It is wonderful that the Queen endured it at all, especially as she was expecting a confinement and was not in vigorous health.

On June 29th, 1798, they were back in Charlottenburg where they inhabited the right wing of the castle. A few days later, July 6th, homage was given in Berlin and on July 13th Louise gave birth to her daughter Charlotte.¹

On the whole the furnishing of the castle *Unter den Linden* was very simple but the room prepared for the confinement was so splendid that it is admired to-day. The walls are hung with heavy silk stuff displaying broad yellow velvet stripes decorated with flowers on a white ground. In an alcove stands the great wide canopied bed. Here Louise dreamed away many hours—often she did not leave it until noon although she was called at 8 A.M. Frequent feverish attacks and headache were the reason

¹ Later she was known as Alexandra Feodorowna, having married Czar Nicholas I.

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for this prolonged resting, as well as fatigue after dancing all night. Her children were brought to her room and played about there for a couple of hours.

In the late summer, the whole family migrated to Paretz—a house that Louise was very fond of. Here she was called the “gracious lady of Paretz,” and felt herself as such. Her coronation did not change her. After it, as before, she mingled with the peasants and took part in their rustic fêtes. Everyone was at liberty to speak to her.

In the early days of his reign, the King held a levée every day. The humblest woman was admitted to his presence and given a hearing. The story of the fishwife of Schwedt—the castle of the late Prince Louis—is well known. Shortly before his death, Prince Louis had promised the good old woman 6000 thalers with which to build a new house. This was to be given to her in instalments. But only one payment had been made when the Prince died and his heirs gave no further attention to the matter. The old woman betook herself to Berlin and made her way to the castle. She

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said that she had heard that the brother of Prince Louis had become King and she desired to present a petition. The royal pair received her and asked what she wanted. When she had explained it all, she said in dialect to the King: "His brother was an honourable man and I think he must be one too and as he has become something, he will let my house be built."

The King agreed and gave her the necessary order. A few weeks later the fish woman appeared again in the castle, bringing with her a cask of lampreys, which she presented with the words: "As I see that he is as honourable as his brother, I bring a little cask of lampreys for his majesty." And the King accepted it with appreciation.

This simplicity in King and Queen was looked on somewhat askance, especially in diplomatic circles. It was not considered proper to be on such easy terms with the populace at an epoch when the King had so much at stake and needed to fix his attention on foreign policy. But that did not interest him. The diplomats were in despair over him. "A good burgher, an excellent father of a family, but no King for these times,"

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wrote Prince Dietrichstein to his Court at Vienna.

Louise, too, had preferred her life as Crown Princess. Not that she disliked being Queen, but she missed the simpler life. "If I could only lay aside rank and dignity and consort with people I really like," she wrote to her brother, after her accession. She found adjustment to the new conditions difficult.

At the outset, the King was rather apprehensive lest his power as sovereign might be injured by Louise's intrusion into his functions; and the young Queen kept herself in the background. But gradually the shy silent man accustomed himself to deputing to her various official duties demanded by his station. On their journeys, for example, Louise often received deputations and spoke at receptions. And he was quite content to stand back and rejoiced that his wife understood everything so well.

At the beginning of 1799, she experienced the first great grief of her life. Her sister Frederica was obliged to leave the Prussian Court. After her affair with Louis Ferdinand, this beautiful, much-wooed widow had contracted a secret

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marriage with Prince Solms-Braunfels, Captain of the Bodyguard, and Anspach became her home. Louise was in despair. But she was the first to forgive her sister for the *mésalliance*, although Frederica had never taken her into her confidence. Louise was hurt by this fact as she had never had a secret from her sister. At the King's command—he considered the conduct of his sister-in-law scandalous—Frederica was obliged to sever all connection with the royal family, renounce her coat of arms, her title as royal highness and a princely basis household. Through the Queen's intercession, she was allowed to take her daughter with her on the condition that, later, the girl was to be educated in the Prussian Court. Frederica did not long remain, however, restricted to private titles. In 1815, she married the Duke of Cumberland and became Queen of Hanover.

After her sister left her, Louise became more intimate with the Princess Radziwill. "On the very day of the departure of Princess Louis," wrote the Princess in her memoirs, "the Queen came to me. She was so terribly depressed



THERESE MATILDA AMELIA

Princess of Thurn and Taxis, sister of Queen Louise
From a lithograph by F. von Rehberg

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that it almost broke my heart. As soon as we were alone, she burst into tears and I wept with her. She felt, only too deeply, the indignation of the King and the Hohenzollerns against her sister and she could not tell her husband how the departure of Frederica affected her personally. I am so sorry that the Queen has had such a chagrin in the midst of official obligations. I lavish on her all the care and affection of which my heart is capable."

Everyone really exerted themselves to console the Queen for her loss. In that year, the carnival was the most brilliant that Berlin had ever seen. On March 10th—Louise's birthday—a very beautiful masquerade took place to which many foreign guests were invited. Prince Augustus, Duke of Sussex, was present. The Queen was dressed as Queen Mary of England whose wedding to Philip II of Spain was depicted. The Duke of Sussex appeared as the bridegroom. But nothing consoled Louise for the irreparable loss of her sister. With indescribable love she clung to Frederica and could not forget her. Even at the end of March, when they were again in Potsdam, she poured

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out her heart to Mme. von Voss and wrote: "I am, moreover, so sad and depressed that I do not know what I can do to keep up appearances when it is absolutely necessary. I feel more than ever that there are no compensations. . . . Now that I am separated from her, it seems to me that the memory of her here, where I have not been since her departure, is more strongly vivid, and that I must find her everywhere. The reasons that separate us cut me to the heart."

At last they met again. Louise and the King took a journey into Westphalia, to Anspach and Baireuth, and then to the sisters on the Main and in Thuringen. After being with Frederica, Louise became calmer and more cheerful. Her longing was satisfied for a time. But the marriage did not prove happy for Frederica. The Prince was brutal and inconsiderate. So much the more did Louise feel it necessary to shower affection on her unfortunate sister. She had often been troubled lest Frederica might be miserable. And now the very worst had happened. Louise suffered unspeakably over it all and sympathised warmly with the sufferer.

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She herself was always ready to forgive and forget an injury, and she was never willing to hurt anyone. The moralists of the epoch could not understand how the virtuous Queen could pass over her sister's lapses so quickly and easily and be ready to pardon all. They forgot that Louise's magnanimity was large enough to understand and forgive human weaknesses, especially in the case of a sister whom she loved more than anything and who had done nothing except to seek love with its happiness according to her temperament and her need. Certainly Louise was not in accord with the judgment of Mme. Voss who wrote in her diary: "It would have been better for her to have missed the Princess than to have had her always with her."

The return journey took the royal pair through Weimar whither Schiller was summoned to be introduced to the Queen. Wieland, too, was present. Then, after a six weeks absence, they were again in Paretz. Later in the summer, Louise accompanied her husband to Silesia and to the Riesengebirge. Here, as invariably in travelling, she took immense pleasure in the

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beauties of nature and the novelty of her impressions.

After this, there came two tranquil years without any especial event, except the birth of two children—the fifth (1799) and the sixth (1801). Life was very regular, whether at Potsdam, Charlottenburg, Berlin, or Paretz. It seems to have been most tedious in Potsdam with the eternal monotony of military service. “One cannot imagine it, if one has not had the pleasure of tasting it,” wrote Princess Wilhelm, the king’s sister-in-law. “Nothing was to be heard the whole day long but the clatter of arms and cannon in the manœuvres, interspersed with the commands of the officers. Every hour was under orders and one day did not differ from another by a hair’s breadth. The sole distractions were the parades in which Louise punctiliously participated, just as, from affection to her husband, she would ride into the camp and interest herself in the affairs of the regiment.

In Berlin, too, daily life was regulated by rule. Frederic William liked it so. His distraction was the pleasure of the table. The Queen made out the menus and was always

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careful to provide the King's favourite dishes.

In 1801, the even tenor of this placid existence was broken by the visit to the Berlin Court of the Russian Archduchess Helena Pawlowna. She was the daughter of the Czar Paul I and not quite sixteen years old. Through her marriage with the hereditary Prince of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, she was brought to Prussia. And from that time to her death she was an intimate friend of the Queen. From her, Louise heard much about her brother, later Alexander I, who was destined to exert so marked an influence on her. Unfortunately, the friendship between the women was of short duration as Helena died in 1803 when she was scarcely eighteen years old.

Great preparations were made for the reception of the young Princess. There were balls and fêtes at which the Queen was resplendent but the beauty of the Russian girl was surpassing. Even the reserved Frederic William grew enthusiastic about her and became one of her chief admirers. Indeed, this went so far that Countess Voss was quite scandalised about it. Louise, however, laughed over her husband's infatuation, while her own affection for Helena almost

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equalled that for Frederica. Nor did she raise any objection to the interchange of letters between Helena and the King although the latter did not stint his admiration for the beautiful young Princess. Later, Louise enjoyed a similar correspondence with the Czar and it was the King's turn to let that pass without question.

Helena's presence at Court brought many guests to Berlin. Duke Karl August, of Weimar, the Duke of Cambridge, the Prince and Princess of Orange, were among the group and contributed much to social enjoyment. Karl August indulged in many amusing jokes, for which he was famous.

Then a novelty was introduced that was considered very attractive. At the banquets, the guests were no longer served, as formerly, at one immensely long table, but at little tables. It was Count Joseph Wengersky who was responsible for this fashion. He was the head chamberlain and Louise rewarded him richly for an innovation which she found very agreeable. Charming excursions were arranged—to Peacock Island or to Paretz, etc. The whole

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company would take tea out of doors and rejoiced to be able to laugh and jest for hours at a time, untrammelled by etiquette,—especially when the imperturbable jolly Uncle George was of the party.

For Louise, the favourite guest was always her brother, the hereditary Prince of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. In the winter of 1799, he was permanently in Berlin—a handsome, slim, blond fellow, bringing youth and gaiety with his presence. To Louise he was a fortunate compensation for the loss of Frederica. Yet he gave her anxiety for he, too, wanted to commit a folly and to marry an unsuitable woman. His sister tried to keep him from this alliance and was successful. In 1816, he married Marie of Hesse-Cassel.

CHAPTER IV

LOUISE AND THE CZAR ALEXANDER I

The Czar desires a meeting with Frederic William III—It takes place in Memel—Louise accompanies the King—The beginnings of the friendly alliance—Alexander and Louise are strongly impressed by each other—The Czar's charm—He breakfasts daily with the Queen—Mutual jokes—Teasing on both sides—The last day—A sad farewell—Enthusiastic letter of Louise to the hereditary Prince George—Her beauty when at Memel—Her personal effect upon everyone—Alexander is bewitched by her—Louise's letter to the Czar.

THE most interesting event up to this time in the life of Louise was the meeting with Alexander I. Her thoughts and her sentiment alike were excited and he would have been the ideal man of her heart had not Frederic William already been her husband.

Shortly after the visit of the Grand Duchess Helena at the Prussian Court, the fate of the

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father was sealed at Petersburg. Paul I¹ was ruthlessly murdered by one of his own officers and courtiers. Young Alexander, his son, ascended the Russian throne. As the policy of the Prussian cabinet had wavered continually between Russia and France, the Czar thought that he might take steps towards a definite alliance through a personal interview with the Prussian king. When his sister and brother-in-law—the Prince of Mecklenburg-Schwerin—returned to Berlin for the second time in October, 1801, they were commissioned to tell Frederic William that Alexander desired an interview with him at Memel. In June, 1802, the project was carried into effect. Louise accompanied her husband. Frederic William's own hope was to complete a triple alliance between Russia, France and Prussia. In this hope he met

¹ Paul I, b. 1754, d. 1801, was son of Czarina Catherine II and Grand Duke Peter. Between 1725 and 1762, the male line of the Romanov dynasty became extinct and the succession passed through females. In this way a German element was introduced into Russian politics. Catherine II was daughter of a petty German prince and she ruled as successor to her husband, the wretched Peter III, 1762-1796. Her son Paul was as wretched a person as his father. His second wife, Maria Federowna, a princess of Würtemberg, was mother to Alexander I who was hailed as a welcome change after four and a half years of the sovereignty of a madman.

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bitter disappointment for Prussia was dependent on the Russo-French policy.

Louise's interest in those "enchanted" days at Memel was so vivid that she wrote down in her diary everything that happened and all that she felt. To her confidant George she sent the pages written in French, adding the pregnant words: "Here is my Memel diary,—the most sacred treasure I possess. Return it promptly, I beg thee in the name of Christ's words. I am making a second [narrative] more interesting and cleverer. But at present I have only this."

Her impression of "the unique Alexander" is vividly depicted: "The Czar arrived at Memel on June 10th between 12 and 1 o'clock. All the troops that were present stood at attention, forming a long lane from the arch of triumph at the city gate to our house.¹ The king rode out to meet the Czar, accompanied by a saddle horse and a carriage with eight horses. Alexander was to choose the mode of entry that he preferred. A quarter of an hour from the city, the two sovereigns met. The Czar leaped

¹ They occupied the house of the Danish Consul.

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quickly from his coach and the two monarchs embraced and paid each other the usual compliments. Then they rode together into the city and dismounted in front of the house that we inhabited. I awaited the Czar in my ante-chamber and advanced to the door to meet him. He kissed my hand and I bent my head as though I would kiss his cheek. (For you must know that the Russian custom is for a lady to embrace and kiss a gentleman when he kisses her hands.) I said to him that in this wonderful moment my heart was too full of emotion to express the happiness I felt at making his acquaintance. He replied very politely, and with much cordiality, for he is very affable. Then he introduced his military escort to me. They had ridden after him. On my part, I presented my two ladies, Countess Voss and my dame of honour, Countess Moltke. When I offered the Czar some peaches, he accepted them with the remark that they were the first he had seen this year. An hour passed and our acquaintance grew a little. At two o'clock we dined. During the repast, I was terribly embarrassed, for the six Russians opposite stared

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at me unceasingly and so annoyed me with looks that were not very considerate that I could hardly eat a morsel. Then it was necessary to make conversation with them, to say little courteous things, and to see to it that my neighbour—who escorted me to and from the table—was not neglected. We had been warned by the newspapers and especially by the Czar's sister and brother-in-law, that he did not care for pomp and official receptions and would prefer to be alone with us in order to profit as much as possible from conversation with the king and myself. For that reason, we tried to avoid official introductions and to meet his desires as far as possible. On this account, we spent the first evening entirely by ourselves. I laid aside a rich heavy dress and diamonds worth millions and wore an elegant muslin frock and curled my hair just lightly. I had called the Czar's attention to this in advance and asked his permission. At half past six he came to me—the two court functions were not to be held until eight. We sat at a table and I made tea which he likes extravagantly and drinks abundantly. After tea, the evening

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passed in going here and there, with conversation, exchange of courtesies with the Russian courtiers, listening to various Turkish and other musical serenades¹ played on the water. Then the generals and Princes of our suite were presented to the Czar. I alone had the courage to tell him that it was their greatest wish, for as he does not like pomp, it was hard to suggest the acquaintance of some fifteen people, which might be disagreeable to him. When the introductions were made, he came to me and said that he was very glad to make the acquaintance of these gentlemen, for he found them very amiable. 'Sire,' I replied, 'in order to find them amiable, one must be as gracious and considerate as you.' 'Ah,' he said, 'I am immensely pleased with this way of acting. There is something frank, simple and natural in it. If we could only do like this at home! But we are still far from that!' The Czar's remark showed me that he felt with what people he had to do.

"At nine o'clock, supper was served at little tables. This meal was less constrained than

¹ *Darbietungen* is the word used by Louise.

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the first and the company separated, delighted that they were to meet again on the morrow.

“On the 11th, at half past seven, there was a review at which I assisted. . . . After the parade, the Czar came to breakfast with me. He drank tea which I prepared myself,—or sometimes chocolate. The conversation was animated and interesting, especially for the two monarchs, and turned chiefly on military matters. After that we separated, dressed and met at two for dinner. In the afternoon, at half past six, we had tea together, and then a ride was taken to the camp in which I joined. Later the ride was extended through the entire city and we returned to supper. The King had a long talk with the Czar, aside, the latter talking in a low voice. I stood at an open window. Then the King, hand in hand with the Czar, came to me, and said: ‘This I can tell you. The Russians have never had an Emperor like this one. He has talked long with me and explained principles which do him honour and which bind me to him for my whole life.’

“The Czar had much to say to me; he was

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very polite and his good heart and noble way of thinking were evinced through the fashion in which he spoke of the soldiers and military in general. He expressed himself very appreciatively about the courtesy and friendliness with which I treated them all. He thought it was really touching to see. I answered him that I found it was impossible to show sufficient interest and respect to a profession which entailed so much toil and peril.

“At noon, a parade and drill took place, and I took pains to be present. The Czar was extraordinarily pleased. Then he came to us after breakfast after he had seen two English trading ships land. The morning passed quickly. Before dinner, I made the acquaintance of the Portuguese ambassador to Russia, Marquis de Riza. He is returning to Portugal. The Czar is fond of him and wished us to know him. He is polished and without pretence. After dinner,¹ full dress for the ball which the merchants gave in honour of the Czar and ourselves. The Czar called for us and we drove

¹ Louise's own phrase. But there must have been hours between dinner and ball.

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to the house selected for the fête. It was a very gay ball and would have been even gayer had not everyone been affected by the exceptional heat. It was so excessive that I felt ill and had to skip a dance in order to recover myself. The Czar did not take part in every dance. During one entire number, he and the hereditary Prince of Mecklenburg-Schwerin remained with me. Before supper, I waltzed once with the Czar. After this, we drove to see the illuminations. They were very pretty and gave evidence, at least, of the good will of the inhabitants.

“On the 13th, there were more manœuvres. But I did not see these, for I had had a bad night and was quite used up. As usual, the Czar breakfasted with us. It was incredibly hot. We begged him so hard that at last he consented to stay one more day in Memel. I presented him with the Order of Sans Souci and the ribbon that goes with it. In order to get a little fresh air, we placed ourselves on a leather sofa that stood between the windows. And the Czar draped back one of the curtains so that people could see how he, the hereditary Prince, and I sat there together. The King



CZAR ALEXANDER IN MEMEL, JUNE 10, 1802
From an engraving by J. F. Bolt after Dahling

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passed to and fro. In jest we named the curtain which Alexander so carefully held back 'Josephine drapery.' We were very merry. The King was teased on account of his preference for the hereditary Princess Helena of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. And in his turn, the Czar was joked by the King on account of acquaintances he had made in Riga, Frau von Blankenhagen and Frau von Corbally. In short there was laughter and one was merry. It chanced that it was the birthday of the Prince of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and I gave him a kerchief made of lilac ribbon. In the evening there was a small ball—only fifteen couples. The music was bad, the company not the most elegant, but we amused ourselves deliciously. At the conclusion of a dance, the Czar sat down by me to rest and we chatted together. Suddenly, everyone rushed to the window, and we learned that someone had fallen into the water. Like the wind, Alexander was below, to help. It was a little boy who had already been pulled ashore. As I looked out of the window, I saw the Czar coming back with the boy—eight or nine years old—holding his hand. In the

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house, the Czar himself poured out tea for the child, which was drunk with pleasure. As if nothing had happened, the Czar then returned to the room. When I said how good he was and how much I was touched, he replied: 'Anyone would have gladly done the same thing.' 'That is to be wished, Sire,' I replied.

"Then there was more dancing—trick playing—endless polonaises, a schottisch, and again another polonaise,—in short we were like children; we hopped about like lambs and everyone was happy and contented.

"On the 14th, the Czar came to breakfast at 11 and gay spirits still prevailed. The Czar teased the King about a certain Fräulein von Offenberg, a Courlander, which made us all laugh. I sang some French romances which pleased him greatly. During dinner I felt quite ill and scarcely had the Czar escorted me from the table, when, for the first time in my life, I had severe spasms and great difficulty in breathing accompanied by tears and intense apprehension. Dr. Wylie, the Czar's physician, was called and after a few hours I felt relieved, but very weak. Nevertheless, from my sofa, I

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made tea for the Czar and our company, as I had done every afternoon. Later, we took a drive to the Lighthouse—the Princess von Würtemberg (née Princess of Coburg, wife of Prince Alexander of Würtemberg, who was on the way to Riga and was passing through Memel), the Countess von Voss and I. After returning, I lay down again on my sofa and the Czar had the kindness to stay by me, while the others came and went, because the whole company at once would have been too much for me. We supped in my salon as I was too weak to go out and we amused ourselves wonderfully. Our circle was increased in addition to the Princess of Würtemberg, by Uncle George, who had great success with the Czar on account of his gaiety and lovable qualities. On the following day, the 15th, I felt much better though still very weak. At nine o'clock I lay on my sofa wearing a peignoir and a boudoir cap, when suddenly in came the Czar, the King in front of him. I was terribly embarrassed, but he is so considerate that he was not vexed with my informal attire. It rained hard so that the manœuvres were delayed until ten o'clock. After these were ended,

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Alexander came and drank tea and chocolate with me. Naturally by that time I was fully dressed. We stayed together a long time. Indeed, it was so late when he left me that I hardly had time to dress for dinner; and after dinner he came to me again. As it was the last day, we wanted to enjoy every moment; but already sadness began to creep over us. Towards eight o'clock, a ride was arranged in which I took part. As our horses were not yet saddled, we walked a little in the garden of our house. Here the Czar let me practice Russian as I listened to his commands given in Russian. After we had mounted our horses, he talked with me about the King—how much he liked him, how highly he respected him. He also praised General Kalckreuth, Colonel Köckritz, Major Holzmann and Jagow, Privy Councillor Beyme and especially, Lombard. He told me how glad he was to have learned to know all these people, and our whole manner of life, and further how happy he felt to be able to repudiate all the false information and rumours current about us. This proved to me that such were in circulation.

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"I used this moment to tell him several things that I had at heart. I begged him to remain just as he was. I warned him how many difficulties he had to overcome—youth, inexperience, various passions natural to youth and to power. He did not take these observations in bad part for he understood that I ventured to speak from friendship. We took our supper out of doors, but this meal was already quite different from the earlier repasts. After supper, he brought the six gentlemen of his Court to take leave. They were the Count Kotchoubey, minister of foreign affairs, the lord steward, Count Tolstoi, the three general adjutants, Count Lieven, Prince Dolgorouky, and Prince Wolkonsky, the friend of his youth; there was further an Herr von Nowossiltsoff, chamberlain and state councillor. When they had taken their leave, he came back into my room with us. Then he went with the King into another room where they talked privately for a long time. We were all depressed, spoke little, thought the more and sighed from time to time. Then we said farewell with an *au revoir* for the following morning at 7 A.M.

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“On the 16th, he came just after 7 o'clock; he was frightfully sad as were we all. I was just about to seal my letters to the two Empresses and to my relations. In order to save me trouble, he sealed them himself and then seated himself by my side. We had a long talk on very interesting topics. At half past nine, he left us. His eyes were full of tears, as were those of the King, of his brother-in-law and my own. Then they all accompanied the Czar downstairs, while I remained at a window that gave on a court where his travelling carriage stood. With a last nod of the head from the carriage, he took leave once more from me and I saw how painfully it affected him to leave us. General Kalckreuth accompanied him in his carriage as far as Polangen. Alexander had much to say to him about the King and me, related much about his land and its government. Then he charged him with a thousand messages for us and with his last farewell greetings. Count Kalckreuth related all this to us on the evening of the 19th in Jerutten whither we had betaken ourselves for a review of the Towarczys and of the 13th Dragoon regiment.

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“Everyone loves the Czar. He is not at all weak and he possesses a fund of goodness and justice which I can only compare to the character of the King. I am convinced that he unites very lovable traits with really good characteristics that make him worthy of affection.”

Still more enthusiastically in regard to Alexander, did Louise express herself in a German letter, written July 15th, 1802, to her brother George. She can hardly find words adequate for her admiration for this “unique personality.” The Prince had written to her about his trip to Switzerland, where he had been captivated by the grandeur of the mountains; Louise evinced little sympathy for all that and replied: “I have not seen the Alps, indeed, but I have seen human beings, or rather one human being in the full sense of the word, who was educated by a dweller in the Alps (Laharpe) and who is worth all the Alps in the world. For these have no effect, but this man is effective; he scatters happiness and blessings with every decision and creates happy contented people through his own graciousness and his celestial goodness. That I am speaking of the Czar, thou hast under-

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stood at the very first word, dear George. Ah, how much is this acquaintance worth to me! Not a word uttered in his praise can be deemed flattery, for he deserves everything good that can be said of him. The Memel conference was divine, the two monarchs love each other tenderly and uprightly;—they are similar in their splendid principles, in their justice, their love of humanity and love for the weal and furtherance of the good. And they have kindred tastes. Much simplicity, hatred of etiquette and of the pomp of royalty and imperialism. Everything passed as could be wished and it will always be so. My good king sends thee a thousand nice messages, acts like an angel and scatters enthusiasm just like the Czar. Colonel Köckritz says, ‘If I did not serve the King, I would serve none other than the splendid Czar.’ There is a proof to thee of what manner of man he is.”

The friendship of Queen Louise—or shall we use a stronger term?—was not one-sided. Alexander, also, carried away from Memel memorable souvenirs. The witch, as Lombard expressed himself, took the Czar prisoner so that

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he spent nearly the whole visit in her presence and when obliged to go separated from her very reluctantly. Her sense of happiness over the acquaintance, actually increased her beauty. In Memel, she was reported as especially lovely and attractive, fascinating and sparkling, in gayer spirits than ever before.

Louise was then twenty-six, in the bloom of her womanhood. It was no wonder that the young Czar admired her. The same thing happened with the foreign ambassadors when they had their first audience with the beautiful Queen. Many were so impressed by her appearance that, at the first moment, they were too confused to utter a single word, although these gentlemen were men of the world and not usually bashful. And when Louise spoke to them with her soft melodious voice, they were completely carried away. In the year 1803, Count Ségur, Napoleon's adjutant, was received by her. He finds no words suitable to indicate the impression made on him as he saw her, half stretched out on a sofa. Her elegant figure was draped in a purple oriental veil and a golden tripod stood near her. The sound of her voice

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alone was enough to captivate him, apart from the lovely picture she made in that setting. "There was such a melodious softness in it, in her words there was something so winning, so touchingly attractive that for some minutes I was entirely overcome and imagined I was in the presence of one of those beings whose fascinating and bewitching personality is described in our old fables."

And Count Lehndorf, who often had the pleasure of being the Queen's partner at the Court balls, also refers to the "celestial tone of her voice" through which she enchanted all present. How much more must the charm of her personality have affected the Czar to whom she herself was attracted, for whom she poured out her entire soul. "The poor fellow," wrote Countess Voss in her diary, "is in raptures and quite bewitched by the Queen." And yet one gains the impression from his letters to Louise that he was, indeed, charmed by her looks and by her personality and that his feeling was rather that of chivalrous friendship than of adoring passion. Then, too, at that time, he was really in love with the extraordinarily

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beautiful Russian Princess Narishkin. This was known to Louise and to the whole Court.

After her return home, nothing remained to the Queen beyond her memory of the visit and her correspondence with the much admired Czar. They exchanged presents and she was always delighted when his gifts arrived from Petersburg. He gave her costly furs, oriental fabrics, rare stones, showing therewith not only remarkable taste, but also an instinct for choosing what Louise would like. His chivalry was that of a true Slav—exercising a charm that very few resisted. How could Louise have repelled such admiration?—she the gentle, pure, feminine woman?

In her letters to Alexander, she was, even for that epoch—affected and sentimental as it was—almost too gushing and it cannot be denied that her words are rather suggestive of the outpourings of a woman in love than of the correspondence of pure friendship. These letters express passion and devotion. Admiration for the man on whom such affection is lavished sounds very like the simple language of love. Louise shows her feelings very freely, as for instance,

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some years later, after the defeat at Jena, when she meets the Czar at Kydullen, 1807—"The immense pleasure that I feel in talking with you makes me egotistical. I think only of myself and my contentment when I write to you. Forgive me, my dear beloved, my incomparable cousin. You are accustomed to do only good and to practice high-minded patience. Be patient with me, too, and especially, especially considerate. What heavenly letters you have written to me! How dear to me are those pen strokes that your friendship traces for me. You have made me very happy with them. Ah, how interesting you are when you let yourself go and how I esteem this cleverness in a man who possesses such a wealth of feeling as you do and is so keenly sensitive. It is, indeed, difficult to remain sensible—and still when one is animated by goodness and an English [sic] tenderness, everything is possible. In you, one realises that perfection which one has rated as a lovely ideal of one's heart, without ever believing that it could be personified. To believe in such perfection, one must know you. But, alas! one does not know you without running

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the risk of adopting for life that criterion of all the virtues. And what would a human being be if he did not have the good fortune of possession and the capacity of grasping the good with enthusiasm? How unhappy we should then be;—our pleasure would be marred and melted to annihilation. But is that wrong? No, it is a gain, for a really sensitive heart feels itself touched by a fine zeal to follow a good example. And I only speak the truth that you, my dear and beloved cousin, have had a beneficial influence on my life.

“How happy I am to be able to say all this to you! You must have found me, during the few days of our meeting again, quite purblind and dumb. I was so happy to speak to you again after these years when we could communicate by writing alone. [It was wonderful] to chat about what was in my heart, saying just what I felt! Only I suddenly found myself obliged to appear every day (during a whole week) otherwise, quite otherwise than I am. I am so little accustomed to pretend that, as a result, I was entirely silenced, confused and at sea. . . . Everyone was spirited, only I not.

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I was shut up in my own heart and so did not dare to speak as I feared to be understood by too many people. One thing I beg of you—*Do not burn this letter*, for it proves how much I love you. As long as I myself am good and love virtue, I shall be devoted to you with all the sentiment which unites me to Providence itself.”¹

Her sentimental enthusiasm found the greatest pleasure in this friendship, but also had a significance for the fate of Prussia.

After the Memel experience, Louise spent three years in quiet domesticity. With 1805, this peace came to an end. But during this time she developed into a personality of real significance. With the development of events, her character ripened and was ennobled. Before we pass to this phase of her life, we must cast a glance at the men and women who were in the immediate circle of Louise and the King.

¹ Note that this is five years later than the Memel episode. The author brings the sentimental phrases together in advance of the events.

CHAPTER V

THE QUEEN'S CIRCLE AND THE WAR PARTY

Louise's associates and the war party—General Adjutant von Köckritz—His incapacity in state affairs—His loquacity—The King's penchant for him—His weaknesses and faults—Baron vom Stein's opinion of him—Köckritz is a danger for the King—His place is secure—Councillor von Mencken—The first cabinet order of Frederic William III—Councillor von Beyme—Lombard, the second councillor of the cabinet—Haugwitz—Lucchesini—The King's policy of neutrality—The Queen's doubts as to this policy—Second meeting with Alexander—The oath on the coffin of Frederic the Great—The Queen becomes the centre of political activities—The treaty of alliance with Napoleon—Its effect in Berlin—Louis Ferdinand and his friends—War sentiment in Berlin—War spirit—Louise's journey to Pyrmont.

TO begin with the general adjutant, Karl Leopold von Köckritz, the King's closest friend. He was a good-humoured fellow, rather too good humoured, indeed, and a friendly but by no means a distinguished personality. His chief pleasures were

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those of the table, a pipe of tobacco and a game of whist. Yet he was so high in the favour of the King that his tastes had to be taken into careful consideration. Louise could show her husband no greater favour than by petting old Köckritz. He was a daily visitor at the King's table—a table famous for its cuisine. For, in spite of his economical desires, the King did enjoy the flesh pots of Egypt and good wine, and Köckritz rarely missed sharing these with him. As soon, however, as he had swallowed the last mouthful, he would vanish like a flash. Louise remarked this and asked the King why the general was in such a hurry every day. But her husband evaded the question and said, "Oh, leave the old man alone. After dinner, he wants his domestic comfort."¹

¹ In a volume entitled *New Letters of Napoleon*, London, 1898, there are various passages indicative of his attitude towards Prussia. Napoleon to Talleyrand, St. Cloud, Sept. 12th, 1806:

"The idea that Prussia might attack me single handed appears to me so absurd as not to be worth discussion. . . . The [Prussian] cabinet is so despicable, the King is so weak and the Court so ruled by young officers eager to attempt adventures, that no reliance can be placed on that Power."

To the Minister of War, May 19th, 1809, in regard to Schill's attempt at rebellion: "You need not mention to Fouché the comical Prussian war."



CASTLE AT CHARLOTTENBURG

From a water colour by J. A. Calau, Berlin Print Collection

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But Louise's curiosity was not satisfied and she succeeded in finding out from others what drove her guest home so irresistibly, and then she put her discovery to use. One day in Paretz, when Köckritz was about to take his leave, the Queen approached him laughing. In one hand she held his pipe, in the other, a wax-taper and a pipe lighter. "Here," she said, "my dear Köckritz. To-day, you need not bolt. Smoke your accustomed pipe here."

The kindly social qualities of the old man had their defects, and his love of loquacity led him to gossip very freely without choosing his audience. Indeed, he seriously injured his career by this practice as he unintentionally let out everything that he had heard. For a long time, the leakage of Court secrets was a mystery. The King and Queen were greatly puzzled; the most trivial little personalities that passed between them were in everybody's mouth. Then it was discovered that the general simply could not control his tongue. The royal pair had been in the habit of talking perfectly freely in his presence because it had never occurred to them that the faithful friend could make any

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use of the conversation. But even the discovery of his unreliability in this regard did not shatter the sovereign's faith in him, nor did he withdraw his confidence, as he was confident of his devotion. Naturally there was felt—especially among diplomats—to be a danger in this continued intimacy. Shortly before his own departure, November 22nd, 1808,¹ Baron vom Stein wrote: "One of the chief tools in the domestic cabal is General Köckritz, he is the nucleus about whom a crowd of people centre—people who are in part weak, in part timid, loving peace, and in part under foreign influence."

Undoubtedly, Köckritz was the friend of everybody. No petitioner appealed to him in vain. He was entirely lacking in knowledge of men, nor was he a diplomat, and, frequently, it was quite unworthy people whom he helped to office, to titles, and to pensions. Finally, there were so many pensioned functionaries and officers of "Köckritz favour" that a deficit was created in the treasury. As early as 1798, the Austrian ambassador, Prince Reuss, criticised him severely. "He is a good soldier, nothing

¹ Again the author leaps ahead of events narrated.

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more." But Köckritz was not even a good soldier, at least in action. He was as undecided and hesitating as his master.

Another of the King's intimates was a marked contrast to the general,—that was the privy councillor, Herr von Mencken. He was really a valuable adviser to the young King. While Köckritz introduced "useless subjects" into the administration, Mencken tried to eliminate all incapables from the public service. "The state is not rich enough," is written in one of the first cabinet orders, 1797, "to pay idle and lazy members. Whoever falls short, will be removed and no great ceremony nor formal procedure will be required as soon as deficiency is evident."

Mencken stayed in the ministry only until 1800. After that, Beyme was appointed first cabinet councillor and Lombard second. Beyme was a talented and upright man.¹ He was not, however, fitted for his post as he was essentially a jurist and his outlook was rather limited and bourgeois. In 1808, Beyme became councillor of the Supreme Court. He remained in

¹ Karl Frederick von Beyme, b. at Königsberg in 1765, d. 1838. He was thus a true Prussian. He was not ennobled until 1816.

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favour with the King and Queen until the advent into Prussian politics of Stein and Hardenberg.

Beyme's right hand man was Johann Wilhelm Lombard.¹ He was a clever man, classically educated, vitalised and active, but one of the worst libertines in all Berlin. He came from a humble rank in life and had risen through his own efforts to the position that he held. Louise speedily saw through his double life and could not endure him. In his own purity, the King never suspected the nature of the private life of his second cabinet official.

Lombard had a staunch support in Haugwitz whom he held in the hollow of his hand. To Lombard's intrigues of the year 1805-06, it was due that the Prussian cabinet was so wavering and that the purposes of Haugwitz won the supremacy over the stronger policy of Hardenberg.

In addition to the bequest of his father's debts, Frederic William III had also inherited

¹ Johann Wilhelm Lombard, b. Berlin 1767, d. Nice 1812. His parents were French refugees, and his sympathies were French. He was probably a dangerous person.

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a very poor cabinet. To be sure, the two most dangerous creatures of this cabinet, Countess Lichtenau and General Bischoffwerder, were at once eliminated, but there remained to injure the state with their inept diplomacy, Count Haugwitz, and Wilhelm Lombard, and also Marquis Lucchesini, Prussian ambassador at Paris. Lucchesini was summed up by his friend Talleyrand in the following trenchant phrase: "Too much wit and not enough intellect." Moreover, this ambassador was entirely under the influence of his wife. She was determined not to leave Paris and its social elegancies. So she influenced her husband to colour his despatches to Berlin in a way most favourable for his personal interests. When his recall was reported, she fainted away. She had schemed incessantly to keep her husband in the French capital. This was the reason for Lucchesini's long silence and the continual subterfuges in his reports to the King. Napoleon did not like Lucchesini and finally himself demanded his recall. And then as revenge for this treatment, Lucchesini advised war with France. It was really owing to the political incapacity among

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the Prussian officials that Napoleon adopted his relentless attitude towards that kingdom. Fortunately, the King also had such advisers as Hardenberg, Stein and Gentz, but even these statesmen were unable to avert the disaster of 1806; and in the very most crucial moment, the King dismissed both Hardenberg and Stein!

From the day of his accession, Frederic William tried to remain neutral in the conflicts that were shaking Europe. He did not want to be involved in European hostilities and he thought that Prussia was strong enough to hold her own against the victorious French emperor who was steadily increasing his power. While the whole world about him was in conflict with the mighty one, while England, Russia, Sweden were defending their rights energetically,—a defence for which these states had to pay later on,—it looked as though Prussia alone were to take no part in the world-shattering events. The royal pair, ensconced at Paretz, seemed separated by an impenetrable wall from the political system. Neutrality had been pledged in the Basel treaty of 1795 and the King could not be induced to enter the coalition of 1798. On the first pres-

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sure of the Czar, Paul I, he is said to have exclaimed: "I am and will remain neutral and if Paul forces me to war it will only be against him." He held as obstinately to this treaty as he did later, after Alexander's entrance on the scene, to the Russian alliance.

He also refused the two later coalitions, or rather his cabinet did. His own vacillation, his indecision, his lack of self-confidence and his very ordinary capacity, both in the realm of diplomacy and of military science, had to be combated even when he had the more efficient advisers at his side. Certainly, Napoleon gained from this indecision marked advantage. From day to day, the power of the French emperor increased. But neither Frederic William nor his diplomats saw in this growth the slightest danger for Prussia.

Louise alone had doubts about the wisdom of the policy maintained by the cabinet and she realised the weakness of her husband. In the early years of her married life—as already said—she had troubled little about affairs of state. Certain events had touched her as, for instance, the fate of Hanover where she was born. Her

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personal aversion for Napoleon began with the execution of the Duke d'Enghien, but that arose not from political antagonism but from a human sympathy. Not until she saw that Prussia was losing credit while Napoleon's star grew brighter and his influence threatened to cover the whole world, did she resolve herself to take a part in the discussions. Her doubts about the wisdom of Prussian methods were, moreover, entirely confirmed after her second meeting with Alexander in the year 1805, when she was even more captivated than on the first occasion. Countess Moltke and Countess Voss were in attendance upon her and they were equally enthusiastic. At the Court of Berlin, the Czar was worshipped as the most idealistic and noblest sovereign in Europe. Only the King and his party were less convinced of this than formerly. For in September, Alexander had insisted that his troops should be allowed to cross Prussian territory—yes, and had almost threatened to force the transit, if it were not accorded to him. Frederic William thought that such talk from “his good friend” was scarcely possible and stubbornly refused the desired permission. He re-

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mained in Paretz and Countess Voss wrote in her diary: "He is just like a mule."

When Alexander expressed the wish to come to Berlin, the King shuddered at the thought of new encounters with him, while Louise was full of happy anticipations. Her husband would have liked to shut himself up in Paretz, aloof from all political complications. He even thought of having a sudden illness so as to escape the dreaded conference. But nothing helped him, and events took their course. On October third, the news came that French and Bavarian troops were advancing through Anspach and had occupied Prussian territory. A privilege that Prussia had refused to the Czar had been coolly taken without leave by Napoleon. Then, when Alexander, in a second letter, definitely announced his arrival in Berlin on October 25th, 1805, the King was still inclined to hold back but was no longer disinclined for a meeting. The visitor arrived and Frederic William again fell a victim to the charms of his fascinating personality.

The presence of the Russians, together with other important personages in Berlin, brought

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in its train fêtes of all kinds—parades, balls, theatrical performances. Once more did Louise and her guests gaily dance the nights away. Her sisters were at the time staying in Berlin and there were many young maids of honour and Princesses eager to enjoy as partners such splendid Russian and Austrian cavaliers. There were French, too, who had come with Duroc, Napoleon's envoy, and Englishmen in the train of Lord Harrowby to participate in the Court fêtes, magnificent beyond compare. With all this entertainment, neither politics nor war were forgotten. The Czar and the Austrian ambassador, then present in Berlin, Archduke Anton, had warned Louise of the dangers that were, through its neutrality, menacing Prussia. They urged that Prussia must take its part in the war against France.

And on November third was signed a treaty between Russia, Austria and Prussia. This provided that Prussia was to be a mediator in peace proposals made to Napoleon. If he refused these offers, Prussia was to take arms against him. At the same time, Alexander assured the King and Queen that he would persuade England to cede Hanover to Prussia.

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The visit of the clever but rusé Czar in Potsdam was completed by the famous oath of the sovereigns on the coffin of Frederic the Great—an oath *not* observed by Alexander. Towards half past twelve in the night, King, Queen and Czar met in the crypt of the garrison church. It was mystically illuminated with wax candles whereby the solemnity of the moment was enhanced. Hand in hand with Louise, Alexander approached the sarcophagus and touched it with his lips. Then he stretched forth his hand to the King across the sarcophagus and swore eternal friendship to him. After this, the Czar entered his travelling carriage and drove away, rejoicing that he had achieved a Russian-Prussian alliance.

Louise was in ecstasy over such a sealing of their bond of friendship. To be sure a slight doubt had already begun to creep into her heart as to whether the lovable Alexander really possessed the depth of soul that she ascribed to him. But this doubt evidently for the moment retreated into the background. Several letters written by her subsequent to this conference are so sentimental and so gushing with admiration

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for "this noble human being" that they might be taken for simple love letters. At any rate, she was convinced that she had in Alexander a faithful ally for the war against Napoleon that was now imminent. Her first letter after the conference proves this. At the close, it runs: "You, my beloved cousin, will see from this scribble that in spite of malevolence, friendship for you is ever dominant in my heart. I stake all my hopes on you, for I am convinced that the welfare of your friends is more to you than English interest, that sets all [machinery] in motion to embroil us¹ with the well intentioned faction. For the King of Sweden is certainly a tool of England. His behaviour is open to criticism. Remain our friend, our protection against all malice, and count on the sentiments of those who are with you, heart and soul."

The last meeting changed her feelings completely. All hesitation vanished and she confronted with confidence an outbreak of hostilities. More and more she entrenched herself within the thought that a war with France was

¹ "Um uns mit der gutgesinnten Partei auseinander zu bringen."

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absolutely necessary. But to begin such war would be a positive scandal. In this belief she was backed by important men like Gentz, Hardenberg and Stein. As they did not venture to try and convince the King directly, because they had not yet come to an understanding with him, they tried to reach him, indirectly, through the Queen. Louise suddenly became the centre of political activity. Later, she told Gentz that she was never asked for her opinion and was not ambitious to be consulted. But from her correspondence with Frederic William and from many official and non-official documents, it is evident that at this time she deliberately worked in favour of war. True it is that she was actuated by the firm belief that fortune *must* favour Prussian arms and that thereby her fatherland would be freed from all alien domination, from all humiliation. "If I had been asked," she added to Gentz, thereby incidentally showing her own bias, "I confess I should then have been all for the war. I believed it was inevitable. Our position had become so difficult that perforce we had to free ourselves from the trammels. Not from cal-

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ulation, but from honour and duty, such a resolve had to be taken."

For the moment, in spite of her influence over her husband, she had no success in bringing him to her point of view promptly, for in December, 1805, through Minister Haugwitz, the King signed the treaty with France which really had as a basis the disappointment about Hanover. Haugwitz had been sent to Napoleon, on account of the treaty with Russia, in order to propose peace or to declare war if the French Emperor would not accept the peace proposals. Haugwitz had not grown to the size of a Talleyrand or a Napoleon. Instead of fulfilling his mission, he struck a defensive and an offensive alliance with Napoleon. Napoleon himself referred contemptuously to this treaty and said: "Two days before the battle of Austerlitz, Count Haugwitz, prime minister of the King of Prussia, came to Brünn in Mahren and had two audiences with me. Fighting had already begun at the outposts and I told him to wait in Vienna for the result of the battle. 'I am going to defeat the Russians and Austrians. Just wait. Tell me nothing now. To-day I cannot listen.'

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Haugwitz was no novice in affairs, and let it go at that. The battle of Austerlitz took place. I returned to Vienna and on December 15th, 1805, a Franco-Prussian treaty was signed which calmed Prussia in regard to the treaty that, a few weeks earlier, Frederic William had executed with the Czar. Prussia promised to disarm and as compensation received the assurance that France would not object if Prussia incorporated Hanover into her realm. In return for this treaty France was to receive Wesel, Bayreuth and Neuchatel."

At this moment, Louise was at odds with Frederic William. As never before she tried to make him realise his own weakness. "Self-confidence is the one thing lacking to thee. If thou couldst conquer that [defect], thou couldst come quickly to a resolution. And if that resolution be once taken thou couldst insist more firmly that thy orders should be followed."

The news of the defeat of the Russians at Austerlitz alarmed her greatly and still more was she chagrined at Alexander's flight after the battle and at the retreat of his army. But her desire for war did not diminish. For the first

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time in their wedded life there were violent differences between the royal pair. She shed bitter tears because she could not win her husband to her opinion—that one thing alone was important: “Beat the monster [Napoleon], beat him to the ground.” With a prophetic feeling, she said to Gentz that the only hope lay in achieving the closest alliance among all that bore a German name. The fulfilment of this wish lay in the future; she was not to see the days of 1813!

The King was not very happy over the alliance struck by Haugwitz, although he remained opposed to actual war. “I signed, my dear Count, but I am very uneasy and tremble at what may follow.” So he expressed himself to Count Hoym. He had only accepted it conditionally, while Hardenberg had urged rejection, and he sent Haugwitz once more to Napoleon with certain counter propositions. Napoleon foamed with rage, loaded the envoy with insults to the King and to his entourage. He spoke, too, of the ruinous “feminine domination” at the Prussian Court, scolded at Hardenberg and demanded his dismissal. The result of all this



THE FAREWELL OF ALEXANDER I AT THE TOMB OF FREDERIC THE GREAT, 1805

From an engraving by J. Berka after Le Gros

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was that Napoleon refused to accept the Schoenbrunn treaty on the score that it had been "signed too late." On February 15th, 1806, he forced a fresh treaty on Haugwitz which provided that Prussia should take sides against England.

To the eyes of Louise, Prussia was inevitably on the brink of war. Energy alone could help the situation. An alliance between Austria, Russia and Prussia seemed to her the only chance of salvation. But after Austerlitz, that was too late. Prussia had to act for herself. Louise had spoken plainly to Count Hoym when he replied to her demand for his opinion: "Your Majesty, I wished to have it arranged as you desired, but the King is in great anxiety about it." "In anxiety," said the Queen. "Just listen, dear Hoym. There is but one course to take. The monster must be defeated, it must be beaten, and you speak of anxiety!"

She was deeply disturbed at the dismissal of Hardenberg. She knew that without him all was lost. For that reason, she tried to persuade the minister to continue the most important political affairs in secret and to stand by the King as adviser. Hardenberg was quite willing

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to undertake secret negotiations with Russia; Louise shared in his efforts and in this way kept in touch with the Czar.

The Queen was not the only person to find Minister Haugwitz inefficient. The King's cousin, Louis Ferdinand, was in a state of rage with him. From that time on, the Prince believed Prussia would be ruined. In December, 1805, he wrote to his sister Radziwill as follows: "Dear sister, I have just received your letter with the news about Austria and the Russian army. The fall of Austria and the unworthy peace which it has made, or at least is about to close with, does not surprise me as I know the incredible weakness that prevails everywhere. It must necessarily awaken mutual mistrust and lead to such a catastrophe. I have long foreseen such an event. Yes, I even mentioned it to the King and Hardenberg. I insisted that someone must be sent at once to Vienna who could calm the people, give them confidence, someone with less doubtful principles than Herr von Haugwitz and his comrade Lombard. When, this summer, I received a letter from Gentz, I showed it to Hardenberg and Zastrow.

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I told them that it was to be feared, if all efforts at a *rapprochement* between the two Courts and for positive measures against Bonaparte were abandoned—that the Vienna cabinet would join the party of France. Instead of pushing ahead, instead of an energetic declaration that a decision must be made, we just bungled about and did not dare to utter the word *war*. It seems to put everyone in Berlin into a blue funk. We shall have war. But instead of waging it brilliantly as if we had anticipated it, the whole burden will fall on us alone. If, on the other hand, the Russians had not left us in the lurch and if we had been the attacking party, we could have taken possession of the upper palatinate and the territory between the Main and the Danube. The Russian, Prussian, English, Hessian, Saxon armies comprise about 400,000 men and it is certain that he [Napoleon] would not have found it as easy with us as he did with this Mack and the unskilled generals commanding at Austerlitz. Give the Queen my respectful compliments and the assurance of my sincerest attachment. And tell her not to lose courage.”

The Queen’s party became more militant. In

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addition to Prince Louis Ferdinand, her supporters were Minister von Stein, Generals Phull and Rüchel. Prince Augustus of Prussia, the Prince of Orange, the King's brother, many superior officers and diplomats were her loyal champions. They all urged the King to war. Louis Ferdinand had Johannes von Müller draw up a memorial wherein he almost implored the King to dismiss Haugwitz, Beyme and Lombard. This only brought him and General Rüchel, who signed it with him, into disfavour with the King. The Prince had to return to the army without any leave-taking. Louise, too, was not allowed to see him; and she did not venture to intercede for him. But he wrote her a letter wherein he expressed the fear that he "would shed his blood without being able to bring help to Prussia." He knew not how truly he spoke. A few months later, he fell in the battle of Saalfeld.

Louis Ferdinand had once said to the King who reproached him for his intemperate desire for war: "Out of love for peace, Prussia takes a hostile attitude towards all the powers and will be relentlessly thrown over by one power if war

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demands it. Then we shall fall unaided and, perhaps, without honour."

The war spirit increased in strength, and not only among the officers who wanted to exercise their craft. Louis Ferdinand himself was a man of remarkably versatile tastes, and he offered free-handed hospitality to a large circle comprising distinguished men of many types. Savants, diplomats and artists were all represented, in addition to the army. Frederic von Gentz, Johannes von Müller, Wilhelm von Humboldt, the composer Dusek, besides Blücher, Kleist and Phull, were his friends and frequent guests at his house. And there were clever women in the circle, too,—Pauline Wiesel, to whom he was tenderly devoted, the friend of Rahel, and the latter herself. True, he also permitted adventurers of a dangerous type to have entrée to his house, as well as many young officers, quite insignificant in themselves, who were accessories in the gay evening soirées. He would declare that he needed all these people just as "he needed a fancy dog as a drawing-room ornament." Here is a glimpse as to the ways of the Prince's social life on his country

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estates, given by his adjutant and friend Baron von Nostitz. The same type of entertainments went on in Louis Ferdinand's Berlin palace—and there was always free discussion of politics.

“On the return from hunting, to which Louis Ferdinand was devoted, dinner was served at six o'clock. Here we were joined by the ladies and many delightful men who had gathered while we were at the chase. Choice food and good wines, especially champagne, the Prince's favourite beverage, satisfied hunger and thirst, while the repasts, served in antique style, were enlivened by music and brilliant conversation and were prolonged far beyond an ordinary time. Near the prince stood a piano. Just a turn, and melody interrupted the flow of talk, melody that Dusek would then develop on other instruments. Then a musical contest—it might be called a *musical parley*—would ensue. Sentiments inspired by words would echo on in entrancing musical tones. Meanwhile, more refreshments were placed on the tables to be taken as the guests pleased. . . . The women, stretched out on sofas, jested and were charming, lending to the symposium a tenderness and

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softness lacking in a purely masculine society. On such evenings, the hours flew by unheeded—indeed it sometimes happened that we did not separate until five, six, seven or eight o'clock—many rising from the very chair on which they had dropped down the previous evening."

It is plain enough that in a society like that, with many young officers educated in the traditions of Frederic the Great, but without practical knowledge of actual war—Prussia had not fought since 1796—it was considered quite a simple proposition to sweep Napoleon out of the way, although he had already proved that it was unwise "to eat cherries" with him. Even among educated Prussians there was failure to understand the situation. Certainly, at this moment war was a very bold venture for Prussia as she had refused to enter any coalition and had no allies. Even Alexander had left her in the lurch. This isolation was something that the war party did not reckon on. The Austerlitz victory had made a great difference in the position of Napoleon. With that, he had smashed the Russo-Austrian coalition and had bamboozled Haugwitz into signing a treaty of

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alliance with him. The French strength in comparison with that of little Prussia—"resting securely on the laurels of Frederic the Great" as Louise phrased it later—was realised by the clear-sighted Emperor but not by the Queen and her entourage. They rushed the country headlong into war at a moment which was peculiarly unpropitious.

And propaganda carried the war spirit abroad. The officers were so bitter against France that they resorted to measures calculated to win them support in their desires. Patriotic plays like *Wallenstein*, etc., were given in the theatres and non-commissioned officers and soldiers were provided with free tickets so as to be ready to make demonstrations at appropriate passages. Antagonism to France—for which there had previously been much sympathy—had increased and was fostered in this way among the populace, while the letters of Rahel von Varnhagen emphasise the general feeling in the social circles of Berlin. In the soirées of Louis Ferdinand, Louise would continually hear the shallow assertions of the young Potsdam officers: "Napoleon put it over the Austrians

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easily enough, but just let him grapple with Prussia,—then he will see!" On his part, Napoleon thought that the Prussians were even more stupid than the Austrians, and said so plainly.¹

These braggart assertions were not quite unauthorized, considering the ineffective Prussian methods which kept the public ignorant of France and the fateful influence of three men,—Haugwitz, Lombard, and Marchese Lucchesini, the Prussian ambassador at Paris. There was complete lack of accurate information, although the combined ineptitude of these three men was evident enough to Frederic von Gentz in the first moment of his appointment to headquarters. In his *Appendix to the Secret History of the Beginning of the War of 1806*, Gentz lays special stress upon the failure of Prussian diplomacy. He criticises, severely, the declaration of war, when Prussia was destitute of allies because she had trifled away her friendships. With England and Sweden, she stood on a war footing, and she could no longer count on Russia

¹ Professor Seeley points out this profound ignorance of the state of affairs in Europe existing in Prussia in 1806. "General Rüchel said on parade at Potsdam, 'His Majesty's army can produce *several* generals equal to M. de Bonaparte.'" *Life and Times of Stein*, I, p. 248.

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and Austria: the negotiations with Austria, at least, came too late. The Prussian general staff was at fault. Above all, he blames Duke Karl of Brunswick—declaring that he had not the slightest grasp of the situation as a whole. His plan of defence was quite wrong. But the King and the Queen were not free to direct the general in any details. They had to consent to what he wished and to give him free scope. Further, Gentz declared that the Duke had cherished a hope of getting Cleves from Napoleon, while, as a matter of fact, this had long since been allotted to the Emperor's brother-in-law, Murat. "This circumstance," added Gentz, "had no little influence on the Duke's actions."

The single officer that counted as of value in the Prussian headquarters was General Count Kalckreuth. It would have been good fortune for Prussia had he taken over the command. But it was not in his power. Lucchesini's suggestions were most disastrous as he repeatedly assured the Duke that Napoleon would certainly avoid the offensive and not begin the war. So Prussia was kept on the defensive and it was assumed that if Napoleon came at all, it would

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be from the direction of Erfurt, whereas he marched from Franken and was in their midst before the Prussian headquarters dreamed of it. There were no such expert spies as were in the employ of Napoleon, to give warning of the movements of the foe.

Gentz characterised Louise as the cleverest and most energetic person in the headquarters, while Frederic William is hardly mentioned. He did not count. "The Queen," said Gentz, "decided with precision, self-confidence, and energy at the same time that she revealed an ability that would have excited admiration even in a man. And, with all that, she was so full of deep feeling that one could not, for a moment, forget that it was a feminine mind to whom admiration was due. A combination of dignity, benevolence and elegance, such as I have never before imagined."

Before the actual commencement of the hostilities that Louise had so ardently desired, she had to take a cure at Pyrmont. Political worries and anxieties, in addition to the loss of her little son Ferdinand, April, 1806, had undermined her health—always delicate. A year

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earlier, when the Czar was in Berlin, and in the midst of a fête at Bellevue, she had had a nerve collapse which had ended with hysterics.

So, in June, 1806, she left the capital, very reluctantly, as it was a critical moment when she was more necessary to the King than ever. To her great joy, her father and brother were at the time in Pymont. The latter's cheerfulness had an excellent effect on her depressed spirits. What worried her the most was the change in Alexander. That was a disappointment that she could not put out of her thoughts. She already began to suspect that the man whom she had idolized, was ready to desert Prussian interests and ally himself with her arch-foe, Napoleon. Slow to confess it even to herself in her inner consciousness, she felt what was coming.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEFEAT AT JENA AND THE RETREAT

Louise's secret participation in the diplomatic negotiations while at Pyrmont—Stein's *Memorial*—The King's optimism about the Rhineland—Napoleon's breach of faith—Louise's steadfast confidence in the Czar—Prussia mobilized—Decision for war—Alexander's falsity—A letter of Gneisenau about the Czar—Louise with the army—Criticism about her presence at headquarters—The opinion of Friedrich von Gentz—Death of Louis Ferdinand—The Queen in danger of being taken prisoner—Fighting begins—The unfortunate message—Flight to Küstrin—Alarming news—Napoleon insults the Queen in his bulletins—Flight—The Queen arrives in Königsberg—Her illness—In mortal danger—Flight to Memel—Rüchel's device in Königsberg.

WHEN Louise returned from Pyrmont, the Confederation of the Rhine had been formed. The assertion has been made that, while in Pyrmont, she had no notion of what was passing, but this was not the case. On the contrary, she had followed every step that was taken, although she did so

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in secret. She kept in close correspondence with her husband, with her father, with Prince Wittgenstein, the Prussian minister at Cassel, with Hardenberg, Stein, the Czar, and with her brother George. In all this correspondence her part in current events or, at least, her intense interest, is plainly revealed. In May, before she left Pymont, Baron vom Stein, without the King's knowledge, showed her his *Memorial* entitled "Representation of the defective organization of the cabinet and of the necessity of establishing a ministerial conference." In principle, Louise approved of this but she thought the contention was too severely expressed. Accordingly, Stein modified his draft, but neither he nor the Queen nor Hardenberg told the King anything about it. From Pymont, Louise discussed this *Memorial* with Hardenberg and Wittgenstein, but she begged the former to burn all the letters in which she had mentioned it. Her participation in these matters, and especially her negotiations with Russia, were to be kept profoundly secret. There is no doubt that she was fully informed of the organization of the Rhine Confederation. Further, she tried

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to persuade the King to make an alliance with Saxony with the view of securing a force of 25,000 men to co-operate with the army of Prussia. At the conclusion of a letter from Pyrmont, she wrote to Frederic William: "I flatter myself that the Saxon troops, united to ours, will do wonders in driving from the land the infamous French, who only scatter misery over the world."

Yes, she was fully aware of all the details; she knew that Lieut. Col. Krusemarck had gone to Petersburg to try and persuade the Czar to mediate with the King of Sweden in behalf of Prussia, and, moreover, she was delighted with the choice of the envoy. She was full of anticipation, too, when Krusemarck returned from Russia. Now she could talk with him about the Czar! "How I love him now, this Krusemarck," she wrote to the Czar; "how I gossiped with him, questioned him about all the things that lay at my heart and that interested me especially. You have guessed what these were. He adores you. He prizes you and thus we are one in opinion."

And then she expresses afresh the affection and

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admiration she feels for the man who had, in spite of intermittent doubts, filled her imagination ever since 1802. She longs for him intensely. Even the preparations for war are welcome as they may bring an opportunity again to see the "unique" man. In the above-mentioned letter, she envies the Duchess of Courland because she had the good fortune to have a glimpse in her house of the Czar. "If you could only make me one a [visit]," she writes to him. "Shall I confess my weakness to you? Just think, to me all the preparations for war . . . No, I do not dare finish the sentence. . . . But I have thought that possibly that would bring me the luck of seeing you again. A luck which I did not believe would again be possible. I have grown so sensible since I was thirty years old—a completely sober-minded woman, I assure you. You would be well satisfied with me. And in order that you may believe it, come and convince yourself of the truth."¹

¹ If Napoleon could say: "Were Alexander a woman, I think I should fall in love with him," it is not surprising that Louise came completely under the influence of his charm.



FREDERIC WILLIAM III WITH HIS FAMILY

From an engraving by J. P. Krethlow after H. Dähling

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She pinned her faith so firmly upon the Czar and his army that she saw in him the strongest support and was completely convinced that Prussian troops would be victorious when it came to active hostilities!

At any rate there is no doubt that even when at Pymont she was perfectly well informed of what was passing. And the French ambassador wrote to Paris that he did not believe that she had returned from there in the least converted from her opinions. She was indeed equally reserved, but was very active.

The significance of the Rhine Federation in relation to Prussia was better understood by Louise than by her husband. In accordance with this alliance, sixteen German Princes had separated themselves from the Empire and had accepted the Emperor of the French as protector. Louise was less optimistic about this than was the King's party, who, for a long time, did not regard it as an act of hostility. They counted it as the acceptance of existing conditions. Napoleon stated repeatedly that he kept his troops in Germany simply against Austria and that he had not the slightest intention of giving

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Hanover back to England—as had been rumoured. But Napoleon did not forgive either the Prussian cabinet or the King that his first overtures to an alliance had been so mistrusted. His troops were in many places and that caused great anxiety in Berlin. Suddenly it was reported that Napoleon had actually offered to return Hanover to England. His armies were on the frontier and ready to advance. Prussia had hesitated too long. It was too late to take the offensive against France. Times had changed radically. What might have been brought about ten years earlier had now become an audacity without parallel. Nevertheless, the thing was attempted and chiefly on the initiative of the Queen and her party.

Haugwitz now became her ally—Haugwitz for whom she had long had an aversion as he had for her. In this case, personal interests played a part as they had with Lucchesini. Napoleon had treated Haugwitz in no flattering way. He was bent on revenge and this was most unfortunate for his country and his sovereigns. It was he who advised the King to admit the Queen to the cabinet councils for he counted

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her opinions as supremely important. From that moment Louise's attitude towards him changed. In her letters, she repeatedly expressed herself in his favour, although she did not wish him to be employed in the negotiations with Alexander. For that she felt that Hardenberg was the suitable man as she did not go so far as complete trust in Haugwitz. Her next closest adviser in political matters was Frau von Berg, who had been the first person to give Louise some idea of state affairs.

At last the pressure of the war party prevailed and Frederic William yielded to their desires. He was embittered by the return of Hanover to England, so that the decision was less difficult for him than it would have been a couple of years earlier. At the instance of Haugwitz, the order for mobilization was given on August 7th. But the official declaration of war was delayed. The King kept hoping that Napoleon would voluntarily withdraw his troops from Germany. Possibly this would have happened if the Czar had on September 3rd ratified the peace treaty with France.

But Alexander was more absorbed in his own

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interests than in those of Prussia and refused the treaty. On that account, General Knobelsdorff, who had been sent to Napoleon, hurried out of Paris, his mission unfulfilled. Napoleon had declared on September 7th that he would withdraw his troops from Germany on two conditions only—that Alexander should sign the Peace and that Prussia should stop the mobilization. With this news, Knobelsdorff returned to Berlin on September 16th, 1806, and on the 17th, war was declared. Hardenberg, the Queen and the King had a conference on the subject in Charlottenburg. Hardenberg was skeptical of the wisdom of this step, considering the opponent, and said so plainly. But Louise was fire and flame for the venture and was inspired with hopefulness. On the very same day Krusemarck was sent again to Alexander in order to make official announcement of Prussia's decision, while Louise wrote to him herself: "Krusemarck has unheard of good luck to see you three times in a year. He has very important things to tell you as our very existence depends on the verdict of Fortune. I really have no anxiety, that I assure you. For it is impossible for an

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army to be inspired with more zeal than ours. That is most important. The next important thing is your constant friendship, beloved cousin, which is shown under these circumstances in its complete unselfishness. If I could only say verbally what I feel. . . .”

Poor woman, in spite of certain misgivings as to the future, she had not the least idea that the false Czar was already playing a game with her and the King! She clung to a belief in the Czar's staunch friendship because she herself, in her rectitude, had never done anything false. She really was incapable of dissembling. She had not the slightest idea how dangerous Alexander's friendship was to Prussia, and her intimate circle was equally unconscious of the peril. Not until years later when wisdom had grown out of misfortune was it realized how untrue Alexander had been toward Frederic William. In a letter of 1809 to Baron vom Stein, Gneisenau refers to the shameful behaviour of the Czar and adds: “In the year 1805, he rang the alarm-bell before all was ready for war. War was declared arrogantly; after Austria's fall he proceeds arrogantly in nightmares—arrogantly, he

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draws back after he had received his lesson . . . his help to the land that he is to protect, is as ruinous as the attack of the foe. And he ends by plundering an ally. I ask whether this Alexander, if he had been Prussia's bitterest foe, could have acted more intelligently to compass her downfall."¹

Such impressions as these were either too late or, if conceived in season, were not heeded. In September, 1806, Frederic William took the field with General Köckritz. Louise, accompanied by Countess Voss and some Court ladies, went with him. The King was so terribly depressed that everyone was sorry for him. He was pale and excited, Louise, sanguine and firm. She hated to part from her children, but that was inevitable, for her presence was more necessary at the moment to the weak Frederic William than to her nursery. Ten precious days were lost at Naumburg with trivialities. Napoleon had been given until October 8th to withdraw his troops

¹ August Wilhelm Anton, Count Neithardt von Gneisenau, 1760-1831. He began his military career under Frederic the Great and has been ranked as the greatest Prussian general since that monarch. He was at Waterloo with Blücher and some brilliant work of this campaign was due to him.

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from Prussian territory, although no one believed that he would withdraw. The Elector of Saxony received the royal pair in his castle, while the entire general staff was gathered in Naumburg. There were numerous serene highnesses and high military dignities, Princesses and Court ladies, who all had to be entertained. There were soirées, excursions, parades. In anticipation of a speedy victory, they all abandoned themselves to pleasure. The young officers were especially eager for battle and confident of success.

At first, Louise had expected to accompany the King only until the forward march began. But she went on from Naumburg to Erfurt, which had been selected for headquarters after it was known that Napoleon was at Würzburg. Louise intended to remain as long as the King wished her to. She was, indeed, the moving spirit in the whole enterprise and her influence over her husband was so strong that he did, in the main, what she desired, but still she was woman enough to subordinate herself to him in certain things that depended on his personal wish. "Luckily the King has allowed me to

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accompany him," she said to Herr von Goetzen just before leaving Erfurt, "and I will not leave him until he wishes it. . . . How would it be possible for me to be banished to Berlin? Is it desirable that I should be informed of the military events through Herr von Bray? [The Prussian Minister.]"

She was with the King constantly. They drove together in a closed carriage, followed by twenty coaches with the retinue. And this was in the midst of the advancing army, between baggage and cannon.

It must be said that the presence of the Queen in the camp was sharply criticised by the various parties. Even among the King's own friends there was not universal approval. Some of them thought that, considering the Queen's greater force of character, it was a good plan for her to be with her husband. Others adjudged it altogether unsuitable. Gentz, though not approving all the Queen's actions, declared that her bearing during her stay was "free from the slightest reproach." Before he arrived at headquarters, he was not at all gratified by the news that Louise was there. But later he

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changed his opinion and said: "And taking everything into consideration (especially Frederick William's indecision and vacillation), I would have voted for her remaining with the army."

In Erfurt, much valuable time was lost. It was consumed with military discussions and negotiations. No decision was reached. Louise made a social centre for the crowd of princelings who had flocked thither. There were the hereditary Prince of Weimar with his wife, the Prince and Princess of Hesse-Cassel and of Orange. Louise's sister, Therese von Hildburg-hausen, with her gay disposition, contributed much to the general entertainment. But the lion of the day was Lucchesini. He possessed intellect and spirit. And he could tell such wonderful ghost stories! The Queen and her guests were enthusiastic over them. Louise herself was much fêted. She was delighted at the battle lust of the soldiers. Wherever she appeared, her carriage was surrounded and she was cheered. She certainly had the gift of making people happy. Then she was very successful in official receptions. The King was

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pleased enough to be relieved from this kind of social duty. At Jena, Louise's ease of manner, her natural cordiality, her innate goodness, were very telling. There was no trace of condescension in her attitude, nothing artificial. It was simply her inner self that she expressed. She was gracious to the most insignificant person. She addressed the soldiers with simple human friendliness. In order to fire them with enthusiasm, she showed herself on the highroads to the regiments marching by and "inspired by her courage and her presence all that could be inspired." It was not wonderful that those who worshipped her, cursed Napoleon who insulted her. From the mouth of the populace she heard threats and maledictions against him. In short, all pointed to the conclusion that the war was to be popular. The sacrifices that were to be demanded were not forgotten, but they were considered as inevitable.

The first sacrifice was that of Prince Louis Ferdinand. He and Louise had staked their highest hopes on the success of the campaign and the Prince had taken the field with enthusiasm. On October 10th, his regiment of 6000

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men was surrounded by the forces of Marshals Lannes and Augereau at Saalfeld. The Prince was a valiant soldier and made a brilliant defence. Five hours long did he hold his own against the much greater strength of the French. But at the end he was obliged to give way. The retreat became a wild flight. The Prince's wonderful English horse was shot under him just as he was about to leap a trench. He sprang to the ground and found himself confronting a French sergeant and a hussar. A fierce triangular fight ensued. They demanded surrender. He replied with a vigorous flash of his sabre. Suddenly he tottered and fell. The hussar drove his sword into his breast. When his completely naked body was discovered later, it was found pierced by thirteen wounds.

At first the French did not know who the superior officer was whom they had slain. They had, indeed, noticed the magnificence of his uniform decorated with orders and the hat decorated with feathers, which had fallen off. They thought he was a general.

At the time Gentz wrote to Adam Müller in regard to the Prince's death: "Count Mensdorff-

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Pouilly, a French émigré, was with the Coburg court at Saalfeld when the war began and the unfortunate affair of October 10th occurred. On the day of the battle he had spoken with the Prince and accompanied him—in order to ride towards the French. As the fatal outcome became evident, he rode back to protect the Coburg family. Then General Lannes came into the castle and showed him the Prince's order star and the cross, asking to whom they could have belonged. Mensdorff told him what foe he had conquered. Lannes exclaimed in astonishment: 'The devil! Here is something good! This will make a fine sensation in France.' ”

When Louise heard of Louis Ferdinand's death, she was very sad. For the first time she had a consciousness of the horror of war. She greatly regretted that she had not answered the Prince's farewell letter. The King had been so bitter against him that she had not dared to. Naturally, the death excited the greatest sympathy everywhere. There were tears and lamentations at his loss. But the events had been set in motion. There was no drawing back.

The Queen's continued stay amidst the alarms

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of battle and the turmoil of war became too full of risk. Three days before the battle of Jena, she and the King had withdrawn to Weimar. Here she was suddenly surprised by the French troops as she was on the point of driving into the camp at Auerstadt to join Frederic William. She was accompanied by the Countess Tauentzien. Louise was obliged to return to Weimar. But sojourn there, too, proved impossible. She herself described her flight from Goethe's city: "When I had nearly reached Auerstadt and saw the Castle Eckartsberga ahead of me, the Duke of Brunswick came to my carriage in great trepidation. He had been following the column with the King,—the King drove by, his face full of care, sorrow and anxiety. He (the Duke) said very decidedly: 'What are you doing here, Madame?' Thereupon, I said to him: 'The King thought that I could not be safer than behind the army, since the road that I would have to take to Berlin is no longer safe as the French have stationed their mounted jägers in Ahrenstadt.' 'My God,' replied the Duke, 'does your Majesty see the Castle of Eckartsberga before you? Well, the French are there.

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They are in front of us on the road to Naumburg and to-morrow there will be a decisive sanguinary battle in this region. It is impossible for your Majesty to remain here.' 'I will speak to the King. He shall decide. But which road could I take?' 'Through the Harz, by way of Blankenburg, Brunswick and Magdeburg to Berlin. Moreover, General Rüchel is in Weimar. He will suggest the further route for you.' Then I begged the King to come to my carriage. I told him what the Duke had said and that he believed I was in imminent danger. The King replied: 'If that be so, travel on.' He gave me his hand, pressed mine twice, unable to utter another word. And so, there on the highroad, I got out of his vehicle and into my own,¹ surrounded by infantry, cannon, baggage, and other war-like things. Escorted by an officer and eight cuirassiers, sadly I took my way back to Weimar, which I had left a few hours previously, unsuspecting that a separation was pending."

In Weimar, Rüchel advised her to get back to Berlin as speedily as possible. No horses were

¹ The statement seems contradictory but the words are those of Louise.

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to be had! Finally the general offered her his and an escort of fifty men.

It was on the morning of the memorable October 14th. The cannon thunder of the battle of Jena fell on Louise's ears as she drove northward, her heart full of anxiety and yet very hopeful of victory.

And on she went through Göttingen, Brunswick, Tangermünde, to Berlin. Under way, the Queen's coach broke down. She had to change into the vehicle of her chamberlain and Buch took his place by the coachman. The journey was most uncomfortable. From time to time she heard what was reported from the battlefield. Once the news was good, then again unfavourable vague particulars were given her by the passing soldiers, couriers or village people. Everything was very uncertain. Four long days did she drive on with no sure information about the fate of her husband, nor of the final outcome of the battle of Jena. Then, finally, shortly before she reached Brandenburg, a courier overtook her. He came from Colonel von Kleist at Büttelstedt. When she read his letter all her hopefulness was dashed to the

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ground. All was ruined—the army, the state, her happiness! Her arch enemy, Napoleon, had become the arbiter of the fate of Prussia!

Terrible was the Queen's disappointment, immeasurable her pain at the calamity. Before her flight from Weimar, she had once more begged her husband to take the supreme command in person. But Frederic William did not trust himself. Louise blamed the incapable Duke of Brunswick for the defeat. "Any other commander," was her one thought. Prince Hohenlohe seemed to her the most suitable and the King adopted her suggestion. But she suffered tortures of anxiety and apprehension. What would happen? She must fly, fly with her children! Northward, ever northward, before the pursuing foe. When she arrived in Berlin, she found that the children had already been taken to Schwedt on the news of the defeat. They were housed in Frederica's former castle. And the French were before the towers of Berlin by the time the fugitive Queen reached the city. The King himself was in flight and had written to her, after the terrible carnage of Jena, that nearly the whole army had perished in this



PARETZ CASTLE

From a colour engraving by L. Meyer and Dietrich after Delkeskamp

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frightful battle. "I do not know what has become of them. All that still live wander alone."

On the day following her advent in Berlin, Louise had to continue her retreat. Her next goal was Küstrin. Thither she travelled in breathless haste via Stettin. There a little entr'act was performed. Several court ladies, especially the hereditary Princess of Weimar and the Queen's sister-in-law, Princess Wilhelm of Orange, implored her to arrest the cabinet councillor Lombard. He was suspected of high treason and of understanding with the enemy and had taken refuge in Stettin. The Queen's adherents thought that, with her help, he might be placed in arrest. Louise opposed such a step, but let herself be persuaded and yielded. Under the pretext that, after her departure from Stettin, Lombard could not be protected from public wrath, she advised him to put himself under military protection. There, Lombard was very badly treated. He was examined down to his shirt, his papers were confiscated, his retinue arrested. As nothing incriminating was discovered he was left in peace but retained under surveillance. Not until an order came from

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the King in Küstrin was he freed from his trying situation.

In the meantime the Queen was again *en route*. Küstrin fairly seethed with refugees of all kinds. With all their possessions—beds, furniture, and domestic animals—crowds sought protection in the castle. The throng of human beings and the anxiety of the fugitives were indescribable. Frederic William was awaiting the Queen there. It was a sad reunion. The Queen arrived in a light open wagon with her lady-in-waiting, Countess Truchsess, and with the Chamberlain von Buch. Old Countess Voss was already on her way to Dantzic.

In Küstrin, Louise found Frederic William less overcome than she had expected, less so, indeed, than herself. Immediately after Jena, he had made overtures for peace with Napoleon, for he was sick of war and expected little from his subjects or his army. The defeat had strengthened him in his intense aversion to all war. Now his one desire was to obtain cessation of hostilities as quickly as possible. But Napoleon did not meet him half way. His plan was to dictate the terms from Berlin itself. Yet

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Frederic was cold towards all that passed in comparison with Louise, who was deeply affected by every detail. She did not, in the least, approve of the peace policy at that moment. A "shameful" peace was, to her mind, the most terrible thing that could happen. But after the dreary experiences endured thus far, she did not dare, for the time being, to influence the King in this regard. And the negotiations went on.

In Küstrin, alarming bulletins followed each other in quick succession. The Duke of Brunswick had been wounded at Jena. The Prince of Orange was a prisoner. Erfurt had capitulated on October 16th. On the 24th, the French entered Berlin and Spandau had opened her doors to the foe. On the 26th, the King and Queen had to leave Küstrin. A week later that fortress, too, surrendered to the French. The fugitives were at Graudenz when they heard of this and of the subsequent fall of Prenslau, Stettin and Magdeburg. No course remained open for Frederic William but to accept Napoleon's preliminaries to peace.

Terribly depressed by all these occurrences,

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the Queen continued her flight to Königsberg. She was pale and exhausted. She grew very thin. Her health was seriously affected. Very keenly did she feel that she was not held blameless for the misfortunes that were overwhelming them. Later, she wrote to George about the attitude of her own circle of friends. She felt their criticism. She confessed to her brother that she bitterly regretted her responsibility.

In addition to all the misery of those days, came the insults heaped on her by Napoleon in his bulletins after the battle of Jena. "Napoleon spues insults and abuse upon me," she wrote on November 13th, to her mistress of ceremonies who was by that time in Königsberg, while Louise still remained in Graudenz. "His aides have stretched themselves out on my sofas in my Gobelin room at Charlottenburg. The Berlin palace is still respected. He is living in the castle. He likes the city of Berlin. But he has said that he will leave no sand to the King, nothing but the sandpits. And life has to go on without the insult being avenged!"

Her lamentations were comprehensible enough. Napoleon had wounded her at every

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point—her honour as a woman, her honour as a patriot, as a sovereign. Not only had he permitted the *Moniteur*—the official Parisian sheet—and the *Telegraph*, to heap insult upon insult upon her, but he had not spared her in his own war bulletins and in conferences with his ministers and marshals. He remarked to Marshal Berthier: “Marshal, a rendezvous is appointed for the 8th. Never has a Frenchman failed such an appointment. And there, as it is reported, a lovely Queen will be witness of the battle: so we will be polite and march on to Saxony without taking rest.”

And in the same bulletin there is further insult. “The Queen is with the army, dressed as an Amazon in the uniform of her regiment of dragoons. She writes twenty letters a day, in order to scatter fire-brands on all sides. Here is an Armida who, in her blindness, sets her own palace on fire. Following the example of these two great personages (Louise and Prince Louis Ferdinand) the whole Court marches on to war.”

Again in a bulletin of October 17th, there were more abusive utterances and this time on the Queen alone, while he makes Frederic Wil-

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liam completely blameless in everything. "As it seems, everything that has been said of her is true. She was here (in Weimar) simply to kindle the fire of war. She is a woman with a pretty face, but with very little intellect, incapable of foreseeing the results of her actions. Instead of blaming her one should pity her to-day, for she must be frightfully conscience-stricken at the sufferings she has brought to the land and on account of the influence she has wielded over her husband. He, and everyone is agreed on this point, is a perfectly honourable man and has in view nothing but the peace and well-being of his people."

The climax was reached in Bulletin No. 19 sent from Charlottenburg on October 27th. In this, Napoleon plays with the relations between Louise and Alexander.

"The indignation against the instigator of this war," he writes, "has reached the highest pitch. Everyone is convinced that the Queen is at fault for all the sufferings of the Prussian people. Everywhere it is said: 'She was so good, so gentle, only a year ago! But the meeting with the Czar Alexander has changed her com-

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pletely.' . . . In the apartments occupied by the Queen in Potsdam, Alexander's portrait, which he gave her, has been found. In Charlottenburg, her correspondence with the King during the last three years was also discovered as well as various English documents which declared that little attention should be paid to the treaties made with Napoleon,—that they must hold fast to Russia. These papers have become historical documents. They prove, if proof were needed, how unfortunate are the Princes who allow women to have any influence in political matters. The notes, the data and the state papers, all smell of Moscow and are to be found among the ribbons and laces, and toilet articles of the Queen. She turned the heads of the Berlin women. To-day they think differently."

The Emperor of the French did not spare in any point the Queen of Prussia. He compared her to Tasso's Armida and to Helen, who brought down ruin on Troy. He forgot all chivalry towards a beaten foe who was a woman and a fine feeling sensitive woman, at that, whose character was really noble. In his hatred

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for Prussia and his scorn for the weakness of the men directing Prussian policy, his whole indignation found vent against Louise, who, in the belief that it was a patriotic deed, had undertaken to infuse into weak hands decision and vigour. Napoleon might have been less severe if he had reproached her only with what rested on proven facts.

As he abominated any interference of women in politics, as he hated feminine domination and despised Princes who submitted to it, he was, from the beginning, biassed against any sympathy for Prussia's Queen,—for whose courage and beauty the rest of the world was full of praise.

He considered her one of those women who forget their feminine dignity and rush into politics with masculine energy and with masculine ambition without having, however, the experience of qualified statesmen, and who, in consequence, ruin everything. He looked upon her as a "bluestocking," a class for which he had a supreme contempt. That is the explanation of his bitter outbreak of rage against a woman, his foe. For him, women were to be decorative only and Josephine was quite right

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when she said that the women at the Imperial Court might have some influence on him five or six days out of the year, but for the remainder counted for nothing.

However, even the most devout admirers of Napoleon's genius must criticise him for forgetting all magnanimity, all tact, all fine feeling and all chivalry, in his ruthless attacks upon Louise. They cannot forgive him for dragging into the mire this person, lacking experience and wisdom but with stainless character and high patriotism. Even Napoleon's intimate circle disapproved his insulting attitude towards the Queen. French historians have not dared to defend him. But the men who supported Louise in her military efforts ought to have been able to protect her from such humiliation. They were perfectly well aware what Napoleon thought of women in politics. They should have kept the Queen aloof from all public participation in affairs instead of dragging her in, as they certainly did.

Meanwhile, Louise continued her journey and met her husband in Osterode. Negotiations for a truce were in progress, to which Louise was

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strenuously opposed. The preliminaries proposed in Graudenz had not been accepted by Napoleon, who had made counter propositions. And Frederic William was hesitating about agreement,—this was in accord with Louise. The King was more irresolute than ever. He did not know what to do;—on the one side a foe making exorbitant demands, on the other war which he would like to have seen banished from the world altogether. In Osterode, it seemed as though events were not affecting him. He busied himself with the merest trivialities and evinced an indifference that was most surprising to all about him. Decision was for him impossible. The majority of his generals approved the conclusion of a truce. And for this reason the Queen's presence in Osterode was feared, for it was believed, and not unjustly, that she might influence the King against that step. But she remained there. And on November 22nd, Frederic William informed General Duroc that he had decided to reject the truce. He did not anticipate the results that followed. But he would rather have abdicated than break his faith with Russia.

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Once more, the royal pair were forced to flight. Their route took them next to Ortelsburg. There, disease and want prevailed. Louise had to endure terrible days, but she did not lose courage. More and more it was impossible to persuade the King to take any initiative. He was moody and unapproachable. He missed Haugwitz who had been so long his adviser. In his stead, there was Baron Stein whose inflexibility did not suit him. Louise was often obliged to act as mediator. She was in constant conflict between the two parties and her life was not gay! Then there was constant apprehension about the advance of the enemy. Ortelsburg became untenable. On December 5th, she set forth again. Now came a fresh complication. Both the Queen and her children fell ill. Princess Alexandrine and Karl—later Emperor William I—all suffered from a type of nervous fever. When Louise arrived at Königsberg in December, her temperature was already high, but she insisted on having a conversation with Hardenberg on the 10th. He came from Memel expressly to confer with her about the formation of a cabinet comprising

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Stein, Rüchel and Hardenberg. Nothing came of the suggestion. Louise's illness prevented, for the time being, all participation in political matters. Her physician, summoned from Dantzic, found her in a very serious condition. "She lay completely prostrate, dangerously ill," he wrote in his diary, "and I shall never forget the night of December 22nd, when death seemed imminent: I watched by her while such a frightful tempest raged without that the roof of the old castle in which she lay was torn off."

The crisis passed, but Louise lay in bed for three weeks, while the French drew nearer and nearer. In its turn, Königsberg was no longer safe. It was necessary for her to leave and she was ready to do so. "I would rather fall into the hand of God than into that of these people," she said. Only an open vehicle could be obtained and in that, in midwinter, midst storm and snow, the convalescent drove on towards Memel across the Courland tongue of land. It was January 5th.

The children had been sent on ahead. The Queen and her escort spent the nights in wretched inns and peasant houses. The cold

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was intense. So frightful was the winter weather, that the horses could hardly make any progress at all. In Louise's train were the lady of the chamber, Frau Schadow, one lady in waiting, Bertha von Truchsess, and the physician, Hufeland. Countess Voss was a few hours in advance, with General Köckritz, in order to find passably suitable quarters for her mistress in Memel. But they were arrested by the storm. Their vehicle was stuck in the next village. The timid Köckritz was in despair. He lamented anxiously: "The French were close on their heels, they would be taken prisoner, and probably butchered," etc., etc. "Well," remarked Countess Voss, calmly, "they would have nothing more than *two* old women." She could not endure the old pussyfoot and dreaded his influence on the King.

In Königsberg, the only people left from the court party were Frederica and her escort and the Princess Louise Radziwill. The latter's eldest son was seriously ill and could not be moved. She was in daily terror of Napoleon's arrival in Königsberg. But for the time being, he did not come, making his headquarters in the

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neighbourhood of Osterode. Louise Radziwill described their mortal anxiety in those days. It was only due to a ruse of Rüchel's that they were enabled to hold out a little longer. The French called him the Don Quixote of the Prussian army and his device had a comical element in it. "The city gates were barricaded, every night the French advance posts were nearer and struck alarm. But the rather wonderful Rüchel, who was very vain and filled with absurd pretence, without any very great knowledge, for his cultivation was extremely superficial, deceived the foe by a device. He only had a few soldiers at his disposal to post at the city gates. Every day these men were dressed in different uniforms so that it appeared as if Königsberg had a fairly strong garrison, able to offer resistance to a sudden attack of the foe."

Meanwhile, the invalided Queen travelled on to Memel, in wretched vehicles and through the bitterest winter cold. In the first night of her journey she lay in a room with a broken window. The snow drifted onto the bed! It was icy cold and there was neither fire nor anything warm for the invalid to eat. "No Queen has

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ever suffered such want," wrote Hufeland in his diary. He was very anxious lest she should have a shock of apoplexy. But the trying journey agreed with her wonderfully well. At least her fever did not become worse.

CHAPTER VII

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Prussia's fate—The Battle of Eylau inclines Napoleon to reconciliation—Louise opposes peace—Reception of General Bertrand—The King declines his overtures—Louise and Alexander vote for the continuation of the war—The Czar comes to Memel—King and Queen accompany Alexander to Kydullen—Louise and Frederica united in Königsberg—Cession of Dantzic and Neisse—Napoleon's victory at Friedland destroys the last hope.

LOUISE'S recovery from her illness was very slow. With January, 1807, came milder sunny winter days. But she hardly cared for the return of sunshine. She was sad and depressed without, however, losing all courage. At Memel, she followed, with keen anxiety, the course of political disturbances that were to decide Prussia's fate,—her fate. Her diary is the silent witness of tearful, painful, anxious nights. At the beginning of December, she wrote:



CZAR ALEXANDER I OF RUSSIA

From an engraving by Citizen de la Richardière
After a painting by A. Desnoyers

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“Who never ate his bread with tears,
Who never sat at his bed-side
Weeping through the sorrowful night,
He does not know you, ye heavenly powers.”

Never were Goethe's lines felt more deeply and truly than by the unfortunate Queen during that dreary period when all hope was gradually vanishing from her heart. For she expected no magnanimity from the man whose bulletins had been so insulting to her, who had made a victorious entry into Berlin and was living in the Hohenzollern palace. Yet, after the battle of Eylau, Napoleon really wanted peace. Talleyrand, too, was anxious for an understanding with Prussia. But Frederic William remained obstinately opposed to any treaty that implied his breaking his alliance with Alexander. He refused all Napoleon's overtures, which, considering the circumstances, really were not so very unfavourable to Prussia. The King held true to the Czar, who was, later, to leave him shamefully in the lurch. Yet at this moment Prussia could have regained all her confiscated provinces. For Napoleon informed the King, through General Bertrand, that all should be

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returned, together with the Polish territory, if he would declare himself ready for immediate peace with him. In vain, Louise herself besought the King to hesitate no longer but to make peace without any consideration for Alexander, who had promised help and who ought to bring it. Against her will, she received General Bertrand, who came from Napoleon's headquarters at Finkenstein and asked to be presented to the Queen. Through him, the Emperor expressed the wish that she would use her influence to hasten the conclusion of peace and that she would not cherish an unjust opinion of him. To this Louise replied ironically and almost in Napoleon's own words: "Women have nothing to say about peace and war." Her own decision, however, was made dependent on the Czar's intention and Louise was happy when Alexander's answer to her husband's letter came. He was decidedly opposed to Napoleon's proposals. He still hoped for military success, counting on the strength of the Russian guard upon the Niemen. Accordingly, Frederic William sent General von Kleist to Napoleon declining his offers. At that crisis Louise would

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have yielded, but she continued to believe in Alexander and was willing to follow his lead. Her heart still beat for the man whom she counted as strong, upright, inspired by all that was noble. He would not, he could not forsake them! She longed for him to be near so that he might give the despairing King some self-confidence. Frederic William had, indeed, decided to continue the war but he was more pessimistic than ever. He had freed himself from Lombard and Lucchesini and had taken Hardenberg again into favour, but he did not understand how to reap the best advantage from the new minister. Like Louise, he based all his trust on the Russian alliance.

At last, on her birthday, in March, the Queen heard, through Prince Troubetskoi, that the Czar was actually coming to them. How happy she was! In him she saw "her saviour, her support, her hope." Now everything would be right! On April 2nd, he was in Memel and took tea with her as of old. But what a meeting! He found Louise bowed down with sorrow and in tears. She could hardly speak. She had had domestic troubles as well as political. The

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Crown Prince was down with scarlet fever. In spite of all this worry, the arrival of the Czar was such a pleasure that it gave her new courage. She admired his military bearing, his energy. He was devoted to her and his sympathy was a consolation. But he was not at all pleased with the King's group of advisers who were urgent for an accommodation with Napoleon. At the moment, peace was not his intention and also not to his interest. He remarked to Princess Radziwill: "All the King's close adherents want peace with Napoleon. They are French at heart. They long to alienate him from me." When, later, he himself turned away from Prussia, he was able to forget his previous words.

A few days later, two ministers, Voss and Zastrow, offered their resignations to Frederic William. Neither of them was ready to trust the Czar, and their departure was really his work, backed by Louise. Just as energetically as Alexander insisted on their dismissal, had he pressed for the appointment of Hardenberg to a cabinet post and the King finally committed the portfolio of foreign affairs to that gentleman.

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This was a significant event in Prussia's history that later turned out well. Louise considered his return as "new life for the monarchy," and "thanked God that she had brought matters to the present point . . ." Zastrow's dismissal was a subject of discussion between the King and Queen. She was anxious that the ex-minister should be sent into banishment—on account of his signature to the Charlottenburg treaty. But the King and Hardenberg considered that too harsh a treatment, and did not approve Louise's severity. She wrote to the King on May 22nd: "I believe, too, that thou shouldst send him far away from the army, into Russia. If thou dost not punish him as he deserves and as is due to thy honour, to the honour of the service and to thy authority, thou wilt have an endless cabal against Hardenberg. Be firm, I implore thee, be a man." In this she was following a suggestion from the Czar.

Alexander stayed but two days in Memel. On April 4th, the King and Queen followed the Czar to Kydullen, where his guard waited. Then Frederic William went with his friend and joined the army at Bartenstein and Louise

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betook herself to Königsberg to remain there until she could either regain Memel without danger to her life from the floods, or until a Prussian-Russian victory might make possible a return to Berlin. For her confidence in *ultimate* victory was still unshaken. She wrote to her father from Königsberg and Blücher took her letter to the Duke of Brunswick who embarked at Stralsund in order to carry on the war in Pomerania.

“Yes, best of fathers, I am convinced that all is now going well and that we shall find ourselves again happy. The siege of Dantzic progresses,—the inhabitants are behaving inconceivably [she meant wonderfully], the soldiers have incredible burdens to carry, but the people give them wine and meat to strengthen them. They will not hear of surrender, would rather perish than be disloyal to their King. Graudenz and Koberg are acting in the same way. God be praised, one can again depend on honourable men, true to their duty. God! What horrible experiences we have had—what kind of creatures we have learned to know!”

And in another letter written two days later,

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the text runs: "The King is with the Czar in the army, he goes for a couple of days a week to Memel and then back to the army, and remains as long as Czar Alexander remains. This beautiful union, based on steadfast tenacity in misfortune, gives the most splendid hopes for the future. Only through persistence can victory be won. Of that everyone is convinced."

Once more, Louise's hopes were bitterly disappointed. Dantzic fell. On May 24th, Field Marshal Kalckreuth capitulated to Marshal Lefevre. "Dantzic! Dantzic is gone! Since yesterday it has been in those hateful hands, hands terrible beyond everything," mourned Louise. She felt that the apathy of the Russian general, Bennigsen, was primarily at fault for the surrender of Dantzic. She poured out her feelings in regard to the loss freely both to Alexander and to her brother George. To Alexander, she said that she hoped he would take Bennigsen's place at the head of the troops and she went so far as to hope that he would have Bennigsen shot. She was wrought up to that extent. "All my hopes for a glorious ending fade away," she complained to George,

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“unless great changes are made here, or unless fortune brings inconceivable things to pass, and brings miraculous results which work more efficiently, more powerfully, than stupid people understand or can compass. Do not believe, however, that my spirit is sunk to earth—is so bowed that I no longer hold my head up. God forbid, —courage, courage does not forsake me.”

As a matter of fact, when outside of the King's circle, she alone was not perfectly hopeless, at least she managed to pull herself together, and if she frequently seemed on the point of collapsing under the burden of grief, she plucked up heart again confidently.

One glimmer of joy came in the midst of this time of misery. Frederica was again with her sister in Königsberg. They shared the house of Countess von Schlieben, slept in the same room and were never apart. Louise was as happy over this as she could be over anything in this hapless epoch. She was also pleased that Hardenberg was at the head of affairs. She hoped that Prussia had again won the confidence of foreign cabinets and that a firmer character would be

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apparent in Prussian policy. In this thought she could afford to take life a little easier. She and Frederica gave no large social affairs, but they did gather guests about them from time to time. There were some musical evenings. Teas and water parties were organised. The society was composed of English, Russian, German Princes with their relations. Hardenberg and Count Dohna, Councillor of War Scheffner, and the family of General L'Estocq were much in the Queen's circle. Then she enjoyed daily walks with Frederica.

But Louise was not to be spared an accumulation of sorrow. Ill tidings were the order of the day. The fall of Dantzic was followed by that of Neisse and, finally, Napoleon's victory at Friedland, on the anniversary of Marengo, destroyed all further hopes. This time it was Louise who longed for peace and who expected conditions from Napoleon that could be accepted. "Perhaps Napoleon wants peace and will make it fairly," she thought. "That is, however, not the right word. For that fellow does not know fairness. But perhaps he will do things from caprice which one does not expect."

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Again she had to leave Königsberg and return to Memel. Frederic William made a short visit to his family. He was extremely anxious about the fate of Königsberg. Even Hardenberg had nothing to advise. Also he saw plainly that Russia would not long be inclined to link its future with Prussia in misfortune. When the news from Königsberg became more and more serious, Frederic William gave way completely. In his despair he wept bitterly about his situation and the frightful ill-luck that pursued him. When Louise and her associates tried to console him, he replied, in deep depression, "A star of misfortune has risen for me. Everything is ended." He was right. On June 16th, Königsberg, the second capital of Prussia, was invested by Marshal Soult. General Rüchel had to vacate the city. Napoleon, however, made his headquarters at Tilsit, while both Prussia and Russia had to withdraw behind the Niemen. But Russia promptly began negotiations with the retreating French, and Russian policy became more and more friendly towards Napoleon. Louise was much hurt by this last tendency. "My soul is sorely tried, my dear cousin," she

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wrote in her stress to Alexander, "and I should be quite hopeless if you had not assumed the guidance of our fate. In such a frightful moment you who have always been true to your heart will not leave a friend in the lurch. And on this heart, which possesses all virtues, do I stake all my hopes for the future. My God, what should I be without you? What would become of the King, of my children? I would be the unhappiest wife and mother, for I had given life to these pure creatures simply for them to learn misery. Ah, dear cousin, do not forsake us! If you could look into my heart and see the thankfulness for all the benefits already bestowed. You would certainly be touched with this immense trust that you would see for yourself.

"My health has suffered a little from the many sorrows. But what matters it? I am an uninteresting being. If I fall, it is no loss. The important thing is that the King may come out of his troubles and that the future of my children is assured; that the King should live, independent and happy. How joyful I would be if I could sacrifice myself for all!

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“Farewell, do not doubt my gratitude, which
will end only with my life. Meanwhile in heart
and soul I am

“Your Louise.”

CHAPTER VIII

LOUISE AND NAPOLEON AT TILSIT

Meeting of Alexander and Napoleon on the Niemen—The negotiations at Tilsit between Frederic William, Alexander and Napoleon—Dismissal of Hardenberg and Rüchel—The King's impressions of Napoleon's personality—The Queen's mediation is considered absolutely necessary—Louise's aversion to this step—She makes the sacrifice—Departure from Memel—Arrival in Pucktopönen—Napoleon sends Caulaincourt and Duroc to her—Her arrival in Tilsit—The first meeting with the Emperor of the French—Courtesies are exchanged—Napoleon does not make a good impression on Louise—He turns the conversation to trivialities—Louise's dignified bearing—Napoleon's gala dinner—A gleam of hope—The ruse for Magdeburg—Bitter disappointment—The Peace of Tilsit—Ruin.

WHILE Louise with these touching words was imploring her still trusted friend, Alexander, for assistance, while she turned to him in her need and hoped for salvation from him alone, the "unique one" was betraying her and Prussia at Niemen.

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Thither he arrived on June 25th, 1807, and on a float on the river had an interview with Napoleon. At this meeting was concluded a truce between Russia and France. His friend Frederic William, to whom so recently he had sworn fidelity and promised assistance, was forced to stand in a pouring rain on the river bank and see the two Emperors in council. Not until the following day was the Prussian monarch admitted to the negotiations.

Just before this, he had written to Louise that a meeting between Napoleon and Alexander had been arranged. This news made the Queen almost beside herself. She was absolutely terrified. She answered the King: "If thou art forced to meet the 'devil' with the Czar, it is thought here that that may, in the end, be good. I confess to thee, however, that I believe the more his vanity is flattered, the greater his demands will be."

She was happy not to be obliged to be present at this meeting. "What have we come to after the immense losses of brave men!" she exclaimed in the greatest consternation, "simply through mistakes, stupidity, incapacity and ill-will . . .

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and then the necessity of *seeing* the monster. No, that is too much! To see the source of evil! The Scourge of the World! Everything that is common and evil is united in one person, towards whom one would have to be pleasant and amiable. . . . In this moment, I owe the poor Czar Alexander many thanks for his delicacy in separating me from him and from thee, so that I at least, should not be exposed to a sight of the monster."

Then on the 26th, the three sovereigns met at Tilsit to discuss the details of the peace. Russia's policy was completely identified with that of France, whose Emperor was saluted by the Russians as "the Friend of Mankind." The most important demands of the victor postponed, however, the final conclusion of the treaty. The King was in despair about the enormous pretensions of Napoleon, who insisted on the possession of the left side of the Elbe and of Magdeburg. Then too, Napoleon made a point of the dismissal of Hardenberg and Rüchel. Louise felt this was peculiarly insulting. She was in dire anxiety lest her husband should be so weak as to yield to the conqueror. She was

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almost "crazy" at the thought. "I implore thee," she wrote on June 27th, "to pluck up courage and be as energetic as thou possibly canst be under these circumstances, and refuse to submit in any point that would injure thy independence. . . . Hardenberg must not be sacrificed, if thou wouldst not take the first step towards slavery and expose thyself to be blamed by the entire world. . . . In thy place I would tell Napoleon that he must see how impossible it is for thee to meet this demand. . . . It is as though thou wert to ask for the dismissal of Talleyrand who serves him well. . . . For the second time, I beg thee to exert all the energy of which thou art capable. . . . Firmness, only firmness. . . . Do not give up Hardenberg, for, if Haugwitz or Zastrow were to return, thou wouldst be a lost man, a slave to France and dishonoured." She advises him to play a little comedy and get Alexander to say that he himself insisted on the retention of Hardenberg who was in his confidence. In short, she absolutely prayed her husband to work for as favourable terms as possible from Napoleon.

The King's cold pride and chary words at

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Tilsit won nothing from Napoleon. The French Emperor avoided discussions on important subjects with him and treated him as a subordinate person.

He talked with him about insignificant details, as buttons on uniforms, shakos, etc., and lost no opportunity of laughing at him. In vain was Frederic William urged by his intimates to overcome his dislike of Napoleon and to be more genial towards him. It really was a physical impossibility for the King to follow this advice,—especially in the situation in which he found himself for the moment. Yet had he been diplomatic he would have been more amiable to the Emperor even if he were not shod in velvet, as Louise put it. But the mere sight of Napoleon filled the King with a sense of repulsion. This can be seen in a letter to Louise written at Picktopönen on June 26th, 1807: “I have spoken with this monster from hell; he was created by Beelzebub to be the curse of the earth. It is impossible for me to describe the impression that his mere look made on me. No, never have I had a harder experience: my whole being revolted at this terrible meeting.

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He was, certainly, very calm,—courteous, but not at all *avenant*. In general, he does not seem to have any sympathy for us. He has in no wise discussed the conditions of our future fate and has avoided touching on that side of the question.”

Napoleon did not present his suite to the King, nor had he considered it necessary, as he did in Alexander’s case, to invite him to dinner. Over the tent on the Niemen, waved a great *N* and an *A* but no *F. W.* Unmeasured bitterness at such contempt on the part of the conqueror is apparent in Louise’s words of the 29th. She calls Napoleon “a devilish being, sprung from the mire, who does not know what is due to a King.” “No, it is really too brutal and I have seen nothing equal to this unworthy and infamous man.” Her scorn and hatred knew no bounds. And still all this rage, this indignation were to no advantage.

In this desperate situation, it was thought that everything depended on the Queen’s presence at Tilsit. She “has grasped the whole subject involved,” wrote Kleist to his sister. “She gathers about her all our greatest men,

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who have forsaken the King and from whom alone can come salvation. Yes, it is she who sustains what is not yet in ruins." And, like Kleist, all the court staked their hopes on Louise. Perhaps it would be possible that her "fascinating affability" could obtain easier conditions from Napoleon. General Kalckreuth expressed this idea to the King on June 28th. Hardenberg, too, thought something might be gained from the Queen's presence. And so did Alexander. He was trying to get better terms for himself from the negotiations and had no idea of alienating Napoleon for the sake of Prussia. But he represented to the King that he suffered greatly from the severity towards Prussia. He greatly preferred that the Queen should make an effort to get something than that he should bring Napoleon's wrath on himself by energetic partizanship of that unfortunate neighbour.

When it was proposed to Louise that in order to save something for Prussia, she should meet the victor who had shown so little magnanimity, who had insulted her so deeply, she felt humiliated by the mere suggestion. Her pride rose in

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revolt. She would be ill, she would go to bed, and close her shutters, rather than to go to Tilsit and to Napoleon. She remarked to General Kessel: "It seems to me as though I should be going to death: as if this man would have me murdered." But her clear intellect soon grasped the situation. She understood that she must make a sacrifice in behalf of her people and her husband and, at the end, she made it willingly. The meeting of the three monarchs, who were so different, the one from the other, gave her little confidence and little hope. "I profoundly mistrusted this conference in Tilsit. Thou and the Czar, who are integrity personified, with that piece of craft, the devil, Dr. Faust and his famulus!"—she meant Talleyrand by that last—"no, that will not answer and no one is equal to meet this machiavellism." And three days later, "I come, I fly to Tilsit, if thou wishest it, if thou believest that I can accomplish any good." She thought, too, that she ought to accede to any wish of the Czar.

At the beginning of July, the King wrote in rather more favourable tone about Napoleon. "What an organizing head he has! And, as I

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have often said, he could, if he wished, do good with it. With his means, he could be the benefactor of humanity just as, up to now through his ambitious plans, he has been the scourge of mankind." Once he characterised Napoleon with a certain keenness. "It is only necessary to see him riding to know the manner of man he is. He goes at a gallop quite regardless as to who stumbles and falls behind him."

In the bottom of her heart, Louise was not very sanguine about the venture. "I do not flatter myself," she said to the King. But she did have profound faith in God and from Him she expected good. In the sad days at Memel, after the events of Friedland, she had written to her father, June 17th: "Do not believe that my head is bowed in humility. Two reasons I have which support me,—the first is the thought that we are not the playthings of Fate, but we are in God's hands and Providence leads us—the second is, we fall honourably. . . . I endure everything with calmness and resignation, such as are only attainable through peace of conscience and perfect trust. On that account, be assured, dear father, that we can never be wholly

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unfortunate and that many a one, weighted with crown and fortune, is less happy than we."

With such reflections, although pained at being a petitioner without being invited by the ruler of the world, she started on her journey and drove to Tilsit. True, Napoleon had taken the trouble to inquire of Frederic William about his sick child, the Princess Alexandrine, and had offered a toast to the Queen of Prussia, but no official invitation had been sent from his side. On the contrary, Talleyrand had done all in his power to prevent the Queen from coming to Tilsit. He had said to Napoleon: "Sire, will you jeopardise your greatest conquest for a pair of beautiful eyes?" For he really was afraid that Louise would, through her charms, obtain favours for Prussia. Napoleon appears not to have heeded his minister but rather to have followed the advice of Alexander. At any rate it is not known who made the first suggestion of her presence. But in all probability, it was the wish of both Napoleon and of Alexander that the Queen should come. Murat seems to have wanted it, too, but not from political grounds. He was bored without ladies and as

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he knew that the Queen was a very attractive woman, he anticipated her arrival with keen interest. Shortly before she started, she wrote to her husband: "As Murat wishes me to come, perhaps he will make court to me."

Indirectly, the same pressure was brought to bear on General Kalckreuth, who wrote to the King and spoke to Berthier on the subject. The latter approved the project and mentioned to the Prussian General that he had casually remarked to the Emperor that the Queen of Prussia might come to the French headquarters. Thereupon Napoleon had replied: "So much the better!"

Louise shuddered at the idea of standing before the hated man. Only a little time previously, she had congratulated herself that she was not to share in her husband's meeting with the "monster." And now she was to present herself to him, and as a petitioner. The mere idea brought on a headache. Her heart was torn and she was to play the amiable. Tears of anger and of pain came to her eyes. But the thought that at the first glimpse of her, Napoleon might be ashamed, lent her courage, and,

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so to speak, vitalised her. She could not and would not believe that her appearance in Tilsit would be so entirely without result. Resigned, she wrote to her husband: "I come because thou and Hardenberg seem to wish it." In the meanwhile, the King had written her a letter full of trivialities. Among other items he mentioned that Alexander was greatly interested in the pretty little maidens of Tilsit. He repeated all the gossip of headquarters, details about the various regiments, uniforms, etc. Frederic William did not seem to have the slightest comprehension as to how his wife would feel about the proposed step. In her diary, she remarks: "What it costs me, God knows. To be courteous and pleasant towards Napoleon will be hard for me. Yet this burden is demanded, and I am accustomed to make sacrifices."

On July 4th, Louise, escorted by the Countesses Voss and Tauntzien and the Chamberlain von Buch, arrived in Picktopönen, the King's headquarters. She lodged in the parsonage which had originally been assigned to Alexander. At first the Czar had stayed in Picktopönen,

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but Napoleon had succeeded in persuading him to move over to Tilsit. Frederic William also had quarters given him in Tilsit in the house of one Müller, but he returned every evening, after the conferences, to the schoolhouse at Picktopönen, in order to avoid being Napoleon's guest. And in so doing, he was not clever. For he gave the two Emperors a greater opportunity for private conversation and a better chance of confirming both friendship and policy.

On the following day, the 5th, the Emperor's equerry, Caulaincourt and Duroc, Marshal of the Palace, came to the Queen and, in Napoleon's name, brought excuses for his not waiting on her in Picktopönen as he could not pass the limit of neutrality. Accordingly, he invited the Queen to come to Tilsit. Therefore, after discussing matters with Hardenberg and receiving his suggestions as to what she was to say to Napoleon, Louise drove to Tilsit on July 6th—to the quarters of Napoleon. She was in full dress, wearing a wonderful white embroidered *crêpe de chine* robe, and in her hair she wore a pearl diadem. Around her neck was a pearl necklace, her favourite ornament. On the same

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day, Napoleon wrote to Josephine: "To-day, the beautiful Queen of Prussia is to speak with me."

Louise did not accept Napoleon's offer of a guard of French dragoons, preferring an escort of the Prussian bodyguard. Surrounded by French troops, whose appearance was to her almost unbearable, Louise made her entry into Tilsit. She went to the house allotted to Frederic William, although Napoleon had had another house fitted up for her with all luxury obtainable in the city. Louise had no desire to accept this courtesy from her foe. It was enough that she had not been able to refuse making the visit. On her journey, she had received a letter from the King with the news that Hardenberg must be dismissed according to Napoleon's strenuous insistence. She was inconsolable at that. Alexander, Frederic William and the Count von der Goltz awaited her in the modest dwelling. The Czar spoke reassuringly to her. "Assert yourself and save the state." Everyone was concerned and desired to encourage her for the painful moment that was before her. Kalckreuth, too, gave her

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good advice. She must forget the past, must not think of the personal insults heaped on her by Napoleon, but only of the King and the salvation of Prussia. The poor Queen shook her head and exclaimed despairingly to the circle about her: "Ah, I beg you, be silent and let me be in peace and collect my thoughts."

In the next moment, horses were heard before the door. The Queen was left alone. Countess Voss and Countess Tauntzien went down to receive Napoleon at the foot of the stairs. He was mounted on a small white Arabian steed and was accompanied by his entire General Staff to make the visit on Queen Louise. Alexander and Frederic William received him at the door. Lightly, Napoleon sprang to the ground and up the narrow steps, where Louise, presented by the King, received him. The Emperor had a little riding whip in his hand. As he mounted the stairs, he saluted on all sides and snapped the lash lightly.

At this moment the Queen looked more beautiful than ever. Her beauty was really regal. Grief and sorrow had lent to the fine features the spiritual consecration of a martyr. Her face

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was pale and seemed illuminated with an unearthly shimmer. Her lovely big eyes were brilliant with the consciousness of a great deed that she hoped to accomplish, for, by that time, she felt sure that she could soften the victor's heart. Louise's whole figure was so touchingly charming and possessed of so much dignified nobility, that Napoleon, in the first moment, seemed actually embarrassed, although he boldly asserted, later, that the Queen received him like Mlle. Duchesnois in the rôle of Ximene on the stage and that this quite disturbed him.

But there is no doubt that he was impressed by her noble bearing. He seemed a trifle restless and, perhaps for the first time in his life, not entirely master of the situation. The matter for which the Queen had taken this step lent her courage and firmness, although her position was to the highest degree uncomfortable. She was "entirely filled with the master thought of duty." Her clear intellect made her forget, in this moment, all that had passed. She received the Emperor of the French with a courteous turn of phrase that referred to the narrow stairs which he had had to mount in

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order to reach her. Napoleon, too, speedily collected himself and he answered chivalrously: "What would not one do to reach such a goal."

Then they had a long talk together. There was no witness to this tête-à-tête. Talleyrand was not present. Certainly Louise made no unfavourable impression upon the "terrible one." Everyone there—her husband, Countess Voss, Frau von Berg, were all fully agreed about Napoleon's being terrifyingly ugly. Frederic William had described him as looking "exceedingly common," Frau von Voss described him as "strikingly plain with a fat, puffy, brown face, corpulent, small and entirely without figure." She writes that his great round eyes "rolled uncannily about" and that he looked like the "incarnation of success." To her his mouth and teeth were his only good features.

Louise was more just. She thought she discerned in Napoleon's head the pure lines of the head of imperial Cæsar. He seemed to her noble and distinguished. To her brother, she wrote, later: "His head is finely formed, the features indicate a thinking man. His *ensemble*

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is suggestive of a Roman Emperor. When he laughs there is a feature of goodness about the mouth. On the whole he can be amiable."

In short, as Napoleon in his old green uniform, without decoration, stood before her, she could hardly believe that this little insignificant man, had, through his ambition, inflicted so much misery on her country. She instantly controlled herself and succeeded in discussing the situation in which she was concerned. She told Napoleon that he must not misunderstand her. If she had interfered in politics, it was because as sovereign and as mother, she had felt bound to try to spare her land and children from suffering and distress. Napoleon did not seem especially inclined to enter into a political conversation with her. He interrupted the Queen with protestations and courteous phrases intentionally turning to trivial matters, just as he had done with Frederic William. He had questioned him about uniforms and he thought he could amuse her with toilettes. He inquired where she had had that wonderful gown made, whether *crêpe de chine* could be fabricated in Silesia, etc. It was not tactful, in this moment so

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terribly tragic for Louise, to chat in this superficial manner. How could he think that just then she was interested in the fashions? And if it had been a mere trick to divert her from a political conference, it must be conceded that the ruse was not very intelligent and certainly not in good taste.

The much-tried woman did not, however, let herself be bluffed. As complete mistress of the situation she put Napoleon right with the words: "Sire, we have met to discuss important subjects." With this she won Napoleon's attention. After that he listened to her. As the conversation progressed, the more did Louise gain assurance, the more confidence there was in her bearing. And she succeeded in impressing the man before her. Possibly he would have succumbed to the irresistible charm of feminine beauty and fascination that emanated from Louise had not his policy been his all-dominant thought. Unfortunately, too, Fred-eric William entered the room at the very moment when Napoleon had been almost ready to give the Queen certain promises. At any rate he did give her answers which justified her

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in certain hopes, but which bound him to nothing. It seemed as though he gave himself up to the pleasant feeling to be with a beautiful intelligent woman without yielding entirely to her charm. He was amiable and *avenant*—nothing more.

The Swedish envoy, von Brinkmann, wrote down a part of the notable conversation from the verbal account given him by the Queen. According to that, Napoleon said to her among other things: "Why did you force me to bring matters to this extreme? How often have I offered peace! Austria, which was in a difficult situation, as you were after the battle of Auerstadt, decided that it could not reject sensible conditions although it still possessed two intact realms. But you have refused every friendly overture?" Whereupon the Queen replied: "After the battle of Auerstadt, it was certainly not the King who broke off negotiations, and recently it no longer depended on us to enter on separate negotiations." Further Napoleon asked what exactly she wanted for the peace. "Now," said Louise, "I am not deceived about our situation. I know that we must make

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sacrifices. But, at least, do not take from Prussia provinces that have been hers for centuries. Do not take subjects whom we love as favourite children. The war has gone against us, but it has not diminished the dependence of our people. I call you as witness of this,—and that is a great consolation for me.” Thereupon, Napoleon, “Unfortunately, Your Majesty, general combinations are opposed to personal considerations.” “Ah, I do not understand the great political coalitions. But I believe I do not infringe my feminine dignity if I express the terrible pain of the King, in case he has to cede any of the ancient provinces of his land. In spite of your reproach about the prolongation of the war, I still cannot believe that steadfastness in misfortune is, in your eyes, a disgrace. But,” she continued, as Napoleon did not reply, “you let me speak without answering my chief question. And yet, it costs you only a word to close a rational peace.”

Thereupon Napoleon declared that he had no intention of destroying Prussia.

When he took his leave, a glimmer of hopefulness fluttered in the heart of the unhappy Queen.

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She had been so charming in her amiability and had offered all in order to win over Napoleon without hurting her dignity! And he had said, "We will see, we will see." Those were his last words. Then he invited Louise to dinner that evening and was gone.

If Napoleon's iron will had weakened at the sight of this lovable woman, that weakness was of very short duration. For Prussia's fate had long since been decided on. At no price would he have permitted his political intentions to be affected by his feelings. A statesman like Napoleon could not submit to such an influence. Later, at St. Helena, he did say to General Gourgaud: "The Queen came to Tilsit too late. . . . I could not give back Magdeburg, because I needed it to protect the King of Saxony."

At eight o'clock, pleased and hopeful, Louise, sitting by the side of Marshal Berthier, drove in Napoleon's eight horse chariot to the Emperor's gala dinner. She was in gay humour. It was long since she had been able to laugh. In addition to Alexander and the King, there were many guests—Prince Henry of Prussia, the Archduke

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Constantine, King Joachim Murat, the Crown Prince of Bavaria and the Countess Voss—and their presence lent to this new meeting with Napoleon a social character. And if everything had not been so sad, just then, Louise might have enjoyed being in brilliant company. She shone in her courageous beauty. The red, gold-embroidered dress that she wore made her look particularly young and pretty. As head-dress, she wore a turban of red silk chiffon, which was very becoming. Napoleon made her a jesting compliment about this turban and said that it might offend the Czar who was on a war footing with the Turks. In the same jesting tone, Louise replied that her turban might greatly interest his Mameluke Rustam. Thus the whole meal time passed in a pleasant atmosphere. Napoleon was very chivalrous in his manner towards Louise, and he also talked in a friendly manner with Countess Voss.

After dinner, he took a rose from a vase standing near her, and gallantly offered it to the Queen. At first, Louise hesitated to receive it, then, as a true woman, she remembered her diplomatic mission and said, laughingly: "Yes,

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I will take it, but only with Magdeburg." Then the conversation about current affairs was resumed. Napoleon asked the Queen how Prussia had dared wage war with him and Louise replied in the words that were praised so highly by Talleyrand for their pride: "Sire, the reputation of Frederic the Great deceived us in regard to our strength; we admit that we were deceived." As the minister was not present during the first interview between Napoleon and Louise, he could only have heard these words from Louise's mouth at the second meeting, after the dinner. Napoleon was still very courteous, but again made no definite promise. He waived the answer aside. "She brought to bear on me," he said at St. Helena, "her whole intellect and she had much. Her ways were very winning, but I was resolved to remain firm although I had to fix my attention very carefully to avoid obligations of any kind and promises of a double meaning, the more so as I was watched very closely, especially by the Czar." Nevertheless, the day ended for Louise in hopefulness. She was not dissatisfied with the result of her meeting with Napoleon for, at the close,

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he said to her, "Madame, it has frequently been related to me that you participated in politics, and now I regret, after all that I have heard, that was not more largely the case."

Thus, the more bitter was her disappointment, the more painful the disillusion she experienced on the following day. The Peace, that before her arrival in Tilsit had hung in the balance, was suddenly signed within twenty-four hours, without Napoleon consenting again to see Louise. On that day, he had ridden past her house several times, but had not entered. Did he, at the end, really fear to come under the witchery of her personality, like the Czar who, in 1802, became Prussia's ally for the sake of the Queen? Napoleon's ambitious plans and his policy did not permit him to give place in his heart to a sentiment to which many a man in his position would have yielded. On the evening of the 6th, he had said to the Czar: "The Queen of Prussia is a charming person, her soul corresponds to her intellect and verily, instead of taking a crown from her, one would naturally have tried to lay another at her feet. . . . The King of Prussia came at a fortunate moment. A quarter of an

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hour later, I would have promised the Queen everything."

And yet Louise had to learn, to her consternation, that his demands were still more severe after, than before, her visit. This was to her a terrible humiliation. Undoubtedly, his hasty action was due to the fact that he did not feel quite safe in relation to her, for he remarked to his equerry, Caulaincourt, "My plan is fixed, and God knows that the most beautiful eyes in the world—and they were very beautiful, Caulaincourt—cannot turn me a finger's breadth from it." And on July 7th and 8th he wrote to the Empress Josephine: "The Queen of Prussia dined with me yesterday. I had to be bravely on my guard to prevent yielding various concessions to her husband as she wished me to. But I was gallant, and kept to my policy. The Queen is very attractive. . . . When thou receivest this note, peace will be signed with Prussia and Russia and Jerome will be recognised as King of Westphalia with three million subjects. . . . But that is only for thee." In a second letter: "The Queen of Prussia is a fascinating woman. She is very amiable

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towards me. But thou does not need to be jealous. I am like a waxed cloth from which everything slides off. . . . It would, moreover, be very expensive for me to play the gallant."

The Peace was published. Prussia was obliged to cede all the provinces west of the Elbe, together with Kottbus, Cuxhaven, the Netze district, and Culm, and a portion of Poland, East Prussia, South Prussia and Dantzic, with a mile about the city. Memel was allotted to the Czar, but he did not accept it. Jerome became King of Westphalia. Out of the Polish possessions the grand duchy of Warsaw was ceded to Napoleon's ally, the King of Saxony. When the King remarked that that was a betrayal of him on the part of Saxony, Napoleon flew into a rage and the two monarchs shrieked at each other. Alexander received the district of Bialystock. In addition to all this, Napoleon inserted a definite phrase in the treaty stating that the few advantages given to Prussia were accorded "out of regard for the Emperor of Russia," that is not on account of the Queen's intercession. Besides all this, Prussia agreed to close her ports to English com-

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merce—in short all was handed over to the victor.

No greater insult could have been offered to Louise. She had come to Tilsit, had swallowed her pride, her *amour propre* and the dignity of her position in order to beg Napoleon for better conditions for her country. And not the least thing had been gained! At the conclusion of the peace, Napoleon had said to Count von der Goltz, that all he had said to the Queen were simply polite phrases and that Prussia owed her continued existence to the Czar. Except for him, he (Napoleon) would have set his brother Jerome on the Prussian throne. "The Queen Louise," he continued, "has never been my friend. . . . But I forgive her. As a woman she had no need to presume [to touch] political interests. She is punished for her ambition. . . . One must do her the justice to acknowledge that she has said very sensible things. . . . At least she showed me more confidence than did the King, who did not think it necessary to give me his [confidence]."

In the evening, Louise had to endure the unspeakable torment of again sitting at Napoleon's

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table. In her honour, he gave his last banquet. It was like a funeral feast. The company were depressed and silent. Napoleon seemed embarrassed. The events of the day pressed upon the guests like an Alp and the conversation was forced, although the chivalrous Murat, in his lively fashion, tried to introduce a more cheerful tone. He did not succeed.

After dinner, the Queen made one more effort to speak with Napoleon on political matters,—for she would not leave the last stone unturned. He cut her short abruptly and said: “You have pressed me to the last extent.” On the way to her carriage, hand in hand with Napoleon, she could not refrain from saying: “Is it then possible after I have been in close touch with the man of the century and of history, that he does not give me satisfaction of attaining my eternal gratitude?” His short reply was, “What you wish is regrettable, Madame. It is the effect of my unlucky star.”

Deeply wounded, the Queen departed sadly from Tilsit. Like Mary Tudor in regard to Calais, she was in the habit of saying, later: “If my heart were examined, the name of

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Magdeburg would be found there engraved." She never again saw Napoleon, although she twice thought of suggesting another conference. Nevertheless, after the meeting in Tilsit, she had a more favourable opinion of him than previously, in spite of his betrayal. This was due to the circumstance that henceforth the Emperor spoke of her on every occasion with the greatest respect and admiration. Whenever she was mentioned, he took pains to praise her in the highest terms. Never again did he permit her to be insulted. Nay, more, after meeting her, he realised that a woman like her deserved respect and admiration. After the events of Tilsit, he had remarked to the Czar that the Queen could have conducted public affairs much better than the King. Therefore, if Louise, in spite of all clever diplomacy, had obtained nothing, it was really not due to her incapacity but to the fact that Napoleon's will was inflexible and he could not let himself be influenced by a woman to change his terms. "States are ruined as soon as women take public affairs into their hands. . . . It would suit me, if a woman wanted anything, to do exactly the

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opposite." That was his principle from which he never retreated. Nevertheless it was not astute of him; perhaps even it was a deciding error in his policy.

If he had yielded to the prayers of the Queen at Tilsit and protected Prussia to some extent, he would have turned a foe into a friend, or at least he would have created a neutral state. Possibly then Prussia would not have risen against him in 1813, ready to renew the conflict. In the failure of Louise's mission, lay the beginnings of Napoleon's downfall, for the misery and oppression of Prussia created the foundation of the union and liberation of Germany.

This foresight was not possible either to Louise nor to her circle. For the time being, nothing was evident but the misfortune and misery of Prussia.

Then there was Alexander! Gneisenau was right when he wrote, March 9th, 1809, to Baron vom Stein: "This Alexander was born to bring ill luck to Prussia."

CHAPTER IX

DARK DAYS FOR PRUSSIA

Last hours in Tilsit and Picktopönen—Return to Memel—Privations and poverty—The King's desire to abdicate—New cares—Louise's disappointment about the Czar—Baron vom Stein—His recall—Mediation of Frau von Berg—Stein as prime minister—Resignation of Beyme—Louise wishes to go to Paris to see Napoleon—Stein objects—Letter to Napoleon—Frau von Berg also writes to Napoleon—Königsberg—Treaty of Paris—Letter to Czar—Meeting with him—Stein's letter to Wittgenstein—Napoleon's anger—Czar returns from Erfurt—Stein's resignation—Journey to Russia.

THE frightful war was at an end. But what sacrifices it had cost! and what an aftermath! No mercy from Napoleon! The Queen's effort had been useless. Bowed down in sorrow, Louise returned to Picktopönen. She had seen him; the giant who had realised that he could crush all his opponents, and she had left him with the conviction that, for the moment, the peoples of Europe

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were not in a position to break his power. But she staked her hopes on the future. A day must come when all would change. In that she steadfastly believed,—steadfastly in spite of moments of dejection when she would exclaim, “God, where are we? To what has it come? Our death sentence is pronounced.” Then her mental suffering became acute. Disillusion was a keen pain to her. Her belief in human goodness and humanity, in sincerity and unselfishness was shattered. Men were not actuated by the sentiments she had attributed to them. To her, who was so human, it was incomprehensible that there could be such people. Her tragic experience left, however, ennobling effects on her inner life. There was a change in her personality. Her understanding of life came to a higher plane. Her earlier carelessness and—we venture to use the term—her superficiality, had vanished. Her latent resources of spirit blossomed out. For this fact must be recognised—Louise was great in misfortune.

She remained in Picktopönen until the signatures had been affixed to the Treaty of Peace. On July 8th, Napoleon sent Marshal Duroc to

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the Queen with his adieux. She made it plain to this messenger that she had never dreamed that she would be so frightfully disappointed. And the French Emperor's confidant had nothing to say.

On the following day, Frederic William was obliged again to meet Napoleon. The latter had expressed a wish to dine with the King of Prussia before his departure for Memel. Was it for the sake of feeding his eyes upon his victim's awkwardness? Certainly there is no doubt that the unfortunate host had to endure Napoleon's rough joking. Among other observations, Napoleon laughingly regarded the Prussian's long breeches buttoned up on the side, and said: "Do you have to button them every day? Do you begin at the top or the bottom?" . . . The whole evening was passed in conversation on this insulting plane. Towards Alexander, on the other hand, Napoleon's tone was most amiable, even flattering. He praised the Russians and remarked that he had a great *penchant* for Russia, while his aversion to Prussia was evident in every phrase. To Count Tolstoi, the Russian court marshal, he expressed himself

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as follows: "Repeat to your Emperor again and again, my dear count, that every favour I show to Prussia is entirely for his sake and not at all on account of the Queen's beautiful eyes and certainly not in the King's behalf." Utterances like that were, naturally, promptly reported to the Prussian royal pair and did not make the feeling towards Napoleon any more kindly. In one of the later interviews, the insult was particularly offensive. Frederic William had allowed himself to make a few protests against some of the articles of the treaty. Napoleon surveyed him with a sarcastic smile and said: "Your Majesty forgets that it is not your province to treat with me and that my dealings are with the Emperor of Russia alone."

At last the torture ceased. Napoleon went off to Königsberg, the Czar to Petersburg, and Frederic William betook himself to Picktopönen, where he arranged for his departure on the following day for Memel, there to remain until Napoleon's troops had evacuated Königsberg.

In Memel and, later, in Königsberg, the Hohenzollern family lived in a fashion that was more than modest. Frequently there was not

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sufficient money for daily expenses. The house-keeping was very simple, yes, almost parsimonious. Eye-witnesses relate that, at this epoch, the poorest subjects really lived better than did the little courts at Memel and Königsberg. The King's finances were in so much stress that he had to part with many an heirloom, many an ornament. In those days of cash shortage, the golden table service of Frederic the Great was sacrificed. Money had to be borrowed, here and there, and help was asked even from the Mennonites. Louise was unable to buy the necessary clothing. Once she wrote to her brother, George, asking for two night-caps which she needed and could not buy because they were too expensive. Her dwelling in Memel was so primitive that the windows would not close. The Queen said they were as thin as paper. Once she was actually compelled to have her bed moved to the corridor because the wind whistled so sharply through the windows that she could not endure the cold.

Then, too, the indigence and misery about her were absolutely terrifying. Memel and Königsberg were filled with beggars, unemployed and

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incapables. Alms were collected to help the many poverty-stricken officials in their dire distress. Many an officer had to split wood in order to earn a bit of bread. And the sympathetic Louise could do nothing to aid them! She herself had nothing, and, helpless, she bowed before the powers of Fate. In addition to daily worries, both King and Queen were depressed by various happenings immediately after the treaty went into force. The French occupation of Prussia was reducing the population to beggary. The war taxes were so high that the King would have been justified in declaring state bankruptcy. But he rejected the suggestion. He decided that, while unhappy, he need not be ignoble.

"The sovereigns are both suffering acutely," noted Mme. Voss in her diary in September. "All this trouble saps their strength. How can they bear this burden of sorrow? The Queen weeps too much."

Naturally, Louise was in low spirits. Continued apprehensions of some new calamity broke her power of resistance, physically and spiritually. Her heart was bled white. In her

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difficulties, she fled to George for sympathy. Very touching is the letter to him, written at Memel, August 8th, 1807. "Rich in experience, poor in belief, I rest my weary head upon thy breast. Ah, George, what a fate, what a future, what a past! Good men commit evil (the Czar); Devils (Napoleon) are the instigators and teach them. This is exactly what I have seen with my own eyes. Incredible incidents have passed (in Tilsit) which are beyond belief unless one has heard them from an eye witness—incidents which betray the greatest rottenness, coldness of the one party and the weakness of the others, which at that time, indeed, had the strong upper hand."¹

"For, be it said to my excuse,—it is a great deal easier to answer for oneself alone than when one must stand for two. For, just as I was about recovered, that is I had dragged my-

¹ As Louise evidently does not wish to mention the Czar's name, her expressions are obscure, while the defectiveness of her German adds to the confusion. The German is as follows: "Die guten tun das Böse (der Zar!) die Teufel (Napoleon) brüten es aus und lernen es ihnen; das ist was ich gesehen habe von Angesicht zu Angesicht. . . . Es sind (in Tilsit) Partikularitäten geschehen, wovon man keinen Begriff hat, bis man sie von einem Augenzeugen selbst gehört hat, die zugleich die höchste Verderbtheit, Kälte, Infamie der einen Partei verraten und die Schwache der andern, die dann freilich die Oberhand stark halte."

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self half way forward in spirit and body, I was obliged to care for the King. What this man has suffered is indescribable. A fortnight on the rack and forced to let the harshest things be said when he was offering all out of pure patriotism in order to wrench his oldest provinces, at least, from the devil's clutches! After daring to storm the heart of *one who has none*, worse infamies followed on the next day. We were deprived of still more and with phrases that were more and more humiliating and disgraceful. Naturally, exhaustion followed. Ah, this will remain and that is what saddens me—saddens me more than anything, . . . I cannot recover properly while weakness, inactivity, want of confidence in himself, injurious methods (in the King), etc., now also have the supremacy and since *gaucheries* are evident and they are worse than ever. It is enough to drive one mad when one sees what one cannot remedy—all this is for thee alone.”

In spite of his feebleness and incapacity, or perhaps just on account of that, Louise had the greatest sympathy with her husband. She pitied him and tried to console and bolster him up.

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When possible, she tried to conceal her own grief so as to cheer him. Every morning, she took a walk with him. No servant, lady in waiting, or dame of honour accompanied them. In these walks they tried, mutually, to give each other courage, while considering what was to happen. It was not easy for a wife to infuse into so weak a character stability and self-confidence. The King was so completely worn out in body and soul that he wanted to abdicate. Suffering did not give to him new strength as it did to Louise. It was feared that—in his self-distrust—he would do something disastrous, while with care, there was still something to accomplish. When a return to Berlin was discussed, he declared that he could only do so in “night and mist” and that he could never again look his subjects in the face. Instead of action, he drifted with circumstances. Rumours of his impotency spread about and there was popular talk that he would abdicate, leaving his son to the mercy of Napoleon. It was even reported that he had already fled with the Queen to England. All the force that remained to the craven monarch was due to Louise alone. She

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made him hope for a better future in which neither he nor his close friends had any faith. The incapable Köckritz was always with him, as well as Herman von Boyen. Count Goltz was acting foreign minister. Beyme, too, was frequently in Memel, but Stein sent him off. Kalckreuth was intriguing to be state councillor.

One man on whom the Queen really relied was Scheffner, councillor of war, and she needed someone like him as a confidential adviser. Countess Berg was not with her but kept in close correspondence and she was the only person from whom Louise found a real support in her anxieties. Through her and misfortune, the Queen became almost clairvoyant in her view of the situation. Frau von Berg explained the peculiarly deplorable conditions that afflicted the State. Radical measures were needed before a new order could rise from the ruins. Louise speedily grasped the fact that all existing institutions in Prussia required reform, the army as well as government, diplomacy, finance. A completely new policy was called for. The ancient hostility against Austria ought to be abandoned. Alliances must be

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made against Napoleon. How clear was Louise's understanding of these points is shown in a letter to her father—"It is plainer to me than ever that everything had to happen as it did. Divine Providence obviously is instituting new world conditions and there must be a new order of things when the old is out-lived and perishes of itself as dead. We fell asleep on the laurels of Frederic the Great, who as master of a new century created a new epoch. We did not move forward with it so it outstripped us. No one is more convinced of this than the King. Recently, I had a long talk with him and he said repeatedly, 'That, too, must be changed with us.' The best and most thought-out plan fails too, and the French Emperor is, at least, more crafty and more sly. If the Russians and Prussians had fought like lions, we should still have been obliged, if not conquered, to have quit the field, and to leave the advantages to the foe. From him, we can learn much, and what he has done and established will not be lost. But evidently he is a tool in the hands of the Almighty, so that the old which has no future, but is quite deformed and over-grown, may be

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buried. Assuredly there will be improvement; for that belief is good warrant. But it is only through good men that good can come into the world. For that reason, I do not believe that Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte sits firmly and securely on his truly brilliant throne. Only truth and justice can be stable and calm, and he is political, that is, clever, and he acts, not according to eternal law, but according to circumstances,—just as these happen to arise. Thereby, he stains his administration with many injustices. He does not act fairly with good things and with mankind. He and his unbridled ambition consider only himself and his personal interests. He is more to be wondered at than loved. He is blinded by his good luck and he thinks he can do anything. Therefore he is without moderation and whoever cannot keep within bounds, loses his balance and falls. I believe firmly in God and in His moral order of the world. I do not perceive this in the Sovereignty of Might, and therefore I am hopeful that after these evil times, better must come. All the better part of mankind hope, wish and expect these [better times] and one should not be

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led astray by the panegyrics of the present day and of its great hero. It is obvious that all that has happened and is happening is not the Last [word] and the Good as it will be and will endure—it is all ephemeral,—passing on the way to a better goal. This goal seems now to be in the far distance; we will probably not see it attained . . . and may die first. As God wills! Here, dear father, you have my political confession of faith, as well as I, a woman, can phrase it.”

Louise might really be called a seer, for all that she predicted came to pass. Naturally, she was not invariably in courageous mood. When she contemplated Prussia's financial embarrassments on account of the indemnity to France of 154,000,000 thalers, she was terribly disheartened.

“All force will soon ebb out of me,” she confessed to Frau von Berg. “It is frightfully hard . . . especially since it is undeserved. My future is very troubled. If we can only retain Berlin! But often the fear weighs down my prophetic heart that he may wrench it from us and make it the capital of another kingdom.

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I have just one longing—to emigrate far away, —to retire to private life and to forget—if that were possible! . . . Savary has assured us that Russia's intercession would not help; he has, however, given us the good advice to send away our jewels and treasures . . . and for him to dare say that!"

But still her greatest pain was in regard to Alexander. A proclamation in the Petersburg journal announced that the Peace of Tilsit had granted him a part of Prussia. This seemed the last straw. The Queen and Countess Voss, who had almost worshipped the Czar, thought it unbelievable that he should actually seem to boast of this.

In a little book consecrated to her most sacred thoughts, she wrote: "He was right, whoever it was who said that there is nothing more terrible than to be obliged to renounce the good opinion one has had of a person. It hurts dreadfully."

In this desperate situation, she staked her hopes on the return of Baron vom Stein to the Prussian cabinet, while she still mourned the loss of Hardenberg. As she expressed it, she

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“howled” for him day and night. Hardenberg’s gentle, respectful being seemed to her exactly suited to Frederic William. “He makes his propositions so tactfully that the King remains the King.” A future without Hardenberg seemed very dismal. No sacrifice would have been too great to get him back. But he did not come. He had, himself, suggested Baron vom Stein as his successor,—in character and temperament his very opposite, but similar in intellect and tact. As early as 1806, Louise had thought that Stein would be the best minister of foreign affairs, but she had not then succeeded in getting his appointment. The King had dismissed him as minister of finance on account of some differences with his favourite Beyme. That was in 1807 after the flight to Königsberg. Nor had the sovereign been gracious in his manner of dispensing with his services. He dismissed his minister as a “defiant contrary, obstinate and disobedient public official who posed on his talent and his genius and was far from having the best in view, acting from caprice, passion, personal hatred and bitterness.” Now it was the Queen who saw this

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same Stein as a saviour. With his strong character, his comprehensive intellect, he would certainly find a way out of the difficulties that, up to then, had remained hidden. Nevertheless she was not without anxiety lest his very firmness would again excite the disapproval of Frederick William. For the King could not endure to have about him strong, inflexible characters. But, thanks to the aid given by Frau von Berg, Louise actually achieved the recall of Stein. The Frau was intimate with Stein and had managed to dissipate the opinion that he had always entertained of the Queen. He had counted Louise a hindrance to his policy because, at the end, she had always supported the King's personal wishes. Frau von Berg took it on herself, to induce her friend to see what a change had taken place in Louise. She wrote to Stein: "I implore you to draw closer to the Queen. If you knew the purity of her nature, you would approve her and love her. She despises petty methods which she might use and for that she deserves respect. It is because of her idea of wifely duty that she shares all the inclinations and the opinions of the King and that she de-

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fends what he defends. Should that be a reproach to her? Meanwhile the present misfortunes are so great and so terrible that her eyes are opened to many things. . . . The Queen does not desire to interfere with the details of the administration, which would not be fitting for a woman, for it would bring her into too many relations and thereby injure the simplicity and even tenor of life, the source of many virtues. But the Queen must find a support, she must find it for every purpose, she must have assurance in the King's associates against men who jeopardise the prosperity of the land and its honour; she needs help for the education of her son, and for every purpose which serves to maintain the dignity of the royal house and the weal of the state. Do you be this support. Do not be rebuffed and alienated by the first annoyances. . . ."

Frau von Berg also influenced the Queen in Stein's behalf. She acknowledged his passionate temperament, his inflexible iron will, but laid stress on the fact that it was necessary for the weak King, in this present desperate situation, to have as adviser a really forceful person.

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For Stein was a man who combined the utmost conscientiousness with a wide vision and a genial energy. He was exactly the man needed by the state. Louise understood this perfectly and she awaited him impatiently. Every delay seemed to her fatal. "Where is Stein? Where is he?" she exclaimed anxiously when weeks passed before he came to Memel.

But he came. He forgot the unkindness of the King whom he loved in spite of his weakness. On October 1st, 1807, Stein arrived in Memel. When appointed, he was ill of a fever, but he made the journey from Nassau in the stormy days of September in order not to lose a moment when the King needed him. Yes, he even refused half of the ministerial salary. The King offered ten thousand thalers, he accepted five thousand. When he did arrive he was welcomed as a saviour. Louise, in especial, drew a long breath of relief, and her confidence increased when he became prime minister and chancellor. "The great master is now with us, —the [man] who can put life into everything and who will so do, for he possesses talent and will-power and energy," she wrote to George.

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She was happy. For the first time since Tilsit, she again had a certain feeling of calm. In Stein she had trust and reliance. She felt able to hold herself erect; her head seemed less heavy with care. She participated in everything that Stein planned. She asked his opinion and took his advice about the education of the children. More important than that, she helped in the formation of a foundation of a league to resist Napoleon's world domination. Stein had, however, many battles to fight before he was firm in the saddle. Many of the King's circle were hostile to him. There were many attempts to alienate him from Louise and Frederic William, especially because he succeeded in dismissing Beyme from the cabinet. Beyme finally became president of the supreme court and in his stead Albrecht was placed in the cabinet. But what did it cost Stein before he persuaded the King to this measure! The new minister had found his chief terribly discouraged and depressed and constantly brooding on the idea of abdication in order to live as a private individual. Stein was inclined to lose patience and to leave the incompetent sovereign in the lurch, and here

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again it was the Queen who managed to smooth things over. She implored the minister to exercise forbearance for a few months, at least. Surely the King would accede to his suggestions! And Stein let himself be persuaded. As Scharnhorst undertook the reorganization of the army, Stein took on himself the reform and upbuilding of the state administration. Gentz called him the first German statesman.

But the situation was very difficult. The frightful pressure exercised by the foe and his excessive demands were continuous. Louise was at her wits' end and actually thought of making one more personal appeal to Napoleon in order to obtain easier terms. In spite of the humiliation suffered at Tilsit, she was willing to stake everything on a fresh personal interview even though she might seem to demean herself in the sight of the world. "The respect of the Emperor is certainly mine," she said, "he mentions me favourably and kindly. . . . It would be, indeed, a momentous decision and a Queen who petitions in person is something unheard of. But I [would] do this as soon as I can hope to reap any advantage for Prussia."

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Luckily, Stein vehemently opposed this plan which might have been attempted without him. It was finally resolved to send the King's brother, Prince William, to Paris in the hopes of persuading Napoleon to take measures for the evacuation of Prussia. Louise was not very hopeful of success from this mission. The Prince did not seem to her the suitable person for the purpose. She thought she could not refuse to give him what aid she could and consented to write a personal letter to Napoleon. It is rather surprising that the minister was willing to permit this but he did. That a statesman like Stein did not shrink from exposing the Queen to a rebuff, even by letter, shows that the situation was felt to be very serious. And it was a very forlorn hope! How could Napoleon possibly be expected to change his plans through a letter from a woman who had suffered so signal a defeat at his hands as had Louise at Tilsit? It would seem as though that experience might have taught wisdom. Even the King, little clear-sighted as he was, had scanty hope of any result and said: "It is easy to believe in what one wishes." Louise was more optimistic



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From an engraving by F. K. Tielker

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and thought she might induce Napoleon to weaken in his severity. Her letter ran: "Sire, Prince William is charged to present to Your Majesty proposals whose successful realisation is of heartfelt concern to us. The restoration of a good and lasting understanding between France and Prussia is desirable from every point of view. . . . The burning wish of my heart is the evacuation of the land which suffers horribly from the presence of the troops. Its resources will be irretrievably ruined, if this continues. Recuperation will be impossible and neither we nor our friends can ever expect anything from it again. Since Your Majesty can be one of those friends [one of ours] you are robbing yourself of a resource upon which you have a right to reckon. The speedy return to Berlin is, moreover, a natural sequence of these things which I have laid before Your Majesty. It is especially desirable for me as I suffer in body and mind more than anyone. As a fond mother, the education of my children lies on my heart. Here, however, nothing can be done for it. My health is completely shattered, as I cannot endure this damp and chill northern

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climate. I venture to mention to Your Majesty this item as one of the reasons, for I know from personal experience and from all your expressions about me that you take an interest in me. Your Majesty knows my confidence in you. I spoke to you about it in Tilsit and I flatter myself that this time you will follow the voice of your heart and will return Prussia to the King and happiness to me,—a happiness that we will prize so much the more because we receive it from the hands of Your Majesty.”¹

How much did this letter cost Louise! It was one of those hopeless deeds which, as she thought, was necessary in order to have done her full duty. “What else can we do? And—if all is lost—we will have nothing to reproach ourselves with. Posterity will judge.”

Her brother George was in Paris at the moment and he, too, was to do his best in Prussia’s behalf. In addition, Louise had charged the Russian ambassador at Paris, Count Tolstoi, to represent their misery to the Emperor. For he had seen it with his own eyes

¹ The translation is made as close as possible to the original, but the French is not perfect.

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and could speak from personal experience. Tolstoi did gain some few little advantages. On the whole, however, all these steps led to nothing of real importance.

Besides that, everything was so primitive, so wretched in this little seaside place that she longed to be again living in comfortable conditions. Her confinement was imminent and she was deprived of nearly all the ordinary conveniences of life. There was a famine in the city and in every item of the administration the greatest economy was needful. Under such circumstances, Louise could not recover either in mind or body. "God keep all mankind from such a life. There is nothing to describe because nothing exists." Thus she sighed out her feelings in a letter to Therese, then living in Paris. There are several contemporary accounts of the desperate situation of the court at Memel. The greatest cross was the supineness, lack of vigour, indifference and indecision with which everything was done—or neglected. Louise looked ill and careworn. Still always "divinely beautiful and lovely," testified Count Ludendorff, when he returned to Memel from a French military

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prison. But her eyes showed how much she had wept. Nor was she at the end of her path of sorrow.

For the moment it was necessary to resign the thought of returning to Berlin. Napoleon did not receive her letter until he came back to France: the Russian envoy had kept it all that time in his desk instead of sending it on by a courier. A letter of Countess Voss, who had also, without the Queen's knowledge, written to Napoleon, never reached the Emperor's hands at all. The ambassador had not dared give Napoleon the letter because he did not like the countess, rather pugnacious as she was.

At the end of November, a very polite but rather dry letter arrived from Napoleon. He promised the evacuation of East and West Prussia. The Queen could then go to Königsberg for her confinement. Berlin was not necessary for that, etc. Louise was in despair. She was destitute of the simplest necessities. In her many hasty journeys her linen had been completely ruined, so that she was glad to find in her possession a couple of chemises that had belonged to her aunt, the Princess Ferdinand.

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She had hesitated to touch them as they were not her property, but at last she begged her aunt to let her have them and could not find words enough to express her gratitude for the gift.

From Berlin came bad news. The French had bought the stock of the Royal Porcelain Factory and taken the state revenues to pay for it. That was the work of Pierre Darus, Napoleon's plenipotentiary. Reports of his life in Berlin reached Memel and were far from pleasant. But nearly two months passed before Louise could leave the dreary city. According to the articles of the treaty with Dantzic, the French finally evacuated the right bank of the Vistula.

On January 15th, 1808, the royal family moved into Königsberg. A fortnight later the Queen gave birth to her ninth child—Princess Louise. Her recovery was more rapid than it had been with her previous infants, but it was evident that Königsberg was no place for her delicate constitution. Advantage was anticipated from a sojourn in the country and, in May, the family moved out to the so-called "Huben" not far from the city. Here they

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occupied the Busolt estate—once the possession of Gottlieb von Hippels, the humourist and author of “*Lebensläufe in aufsteigende Linie.*”

The little country house was charmingly situated, but was so small that it was a tight squeeze for the large family. Louise only had two little rooms and there was no adequate dining room. When someone condoled with her on the limited space and commiserated her for her crowded accommodations, she replied courageously: “I have good books, a good conscience, a good piano and with these one can live more placidly in the midst of the world’s storms than those who raise the storms.” She did not complain that she had to forego so much. She really felt comfortable in this pretty little country house. The simple rustic life, free from the trammels of etiquette, suited her and the King too, after the infinitely exciting changes of the stormy epoch that they had just lived through. She was much in the open air, drank Pyrmont water, wandered about freely—in short there was peace in her bosom.

Louise counted it as a dispensation of Providence that, under these dreary circumstances,

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she was destined to give life to children, who would, in time, contribute something to the welfare of mankind. The complete confidence reposed in her by Frederic William gave her much happiness. He was more genial and amiable to her than ever. "We have become (after fourteen years of marriage) ever new and indispensable to each other." Louise was, indeed, absolutely indispensable to her husband. Without her he could not have endured the weight of sorrow and care.

Out there in the country, there were times when even Louise's old merriment returned. She took pains with her dress for the sake of her husband and children. She interested herself again in literature and music. She read voraciously and extended her knowledge, although Hufeland had forbidden her to overstrain herself intellectually. Old Scheffner and Professor Süvern from Königsberg University were her advisers, Frau von Berg and Frau von Kleist were intellectual friends with whom she carried on a stimulating correspondence. She read the most important books of Mme. de Staël and interested herself in the educational works of the

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pedagogues of Switzerland and other countries. In the evening, at the tea-table, she read French novels aloud.

Undoubtedly, at that same tea-table, all kinds of trivial ideas and unimportant gossip found utterance. Pamphlets, journals and ephemeral publications were devoured. At the same time serious works, such as Schiller's *History of the Thirty Years' War*, interested her immensely and she worked through Lombard's *Material for the History of the Years 1805, 1806, 1807*.

Her comments on that last are clever, far-sighted and remarkably in agreement with Hardenberg's conclusions. Rather less clever are her questions to old Scheffner about history in general. "What is *hierarchy*? I have not the slightest idea. What are the wars called *Punic*? Were they all against Carthage? What were the troubles of the Gracchi?" and so on. But she was perfectly well aware that her knowledge was defective and expressed it once to Frederica in the words: "I have made the acquaintance of Professor Süvern. . . . He paid me a compliment which I feel is undeserved—he said that my judgment on his history is as pertinent as it

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is flattering to him. But ignorant as I am, he must have been simply blinded by my 'Majesty.'" . . . A proof that she learned something from all the people whom she encountered and that she made use of her knowledge. And she really met a large group of important and able men. For example, Scharnhorst was very close to her. In his opinion, Louise had gained during her sojourn at Königsberg maturity in mind and soul, and he found her "infinitely greater and more lovable than ever before." Among her other visitors were Gneisenau, Schill, Novalis, Count Gützen. Somewhat later came Wilhelm von Humboldt, Niebuhr, Schön and Vinck—all men of deed and of intellect. How would it have been possible for Louise to have issued from this circle empty-headed and ignorant?

And then Frau von Berg must not be forgotten as an ever present element in the Queen's development. At the beginning of 1808, the Frau came to Königsberg for a time and she continued to be a valuable friend and confidant; next to Louise Radziwill, she was the favourite of all the women friends of the Queen.

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Everyone who came in contact with the Queen at this epoch was enchanted with her truly great spiritual strength, her mental and humane judgment. "How touching she seemed to me," wrote the Duchess Dorothea of Courland, when she saw Louise at Memel, at a time when all was at the lowest ebb.

At the "Huben" Louise began to grow physically stronger. And she needed strength, for political events were not of a nature to help her improvement. In Spain, Napoleon had destroyed a throne and made his brother a sovereign. This step caused the Queen some anxiety lest a similar fate should overtake Prussia. Apprehensively she asked Frau von Berg: "What do you think of the news from Spain? Is this not fresh evidence of the index-finger of the iron hand, which presses so heavily on the bowed forehead of Europe? In the midst of peace to dethrone his first ally! What have we, we in our position, to expect? Ah, my God, when will the time come, when the hand of Destiny shall at last write on this wall *Mene, Mene Tekel.*"

Meanwhile, in Paris, the affairs of Prussia were continually postponed and it was not until

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September, 1808, that Frederic William succeeded in making an agreement with Napoleon which provided for the evacuation of the French troops from Prussian territory. The conditions were, to be sure, appalling; but even this compact was never signed. It was made dependent on the meeting of Napoleon and Alexander in Erfurt and, when finally put into force, the conditions were even harder than at first.

It was about this time that Louise wrote again to Alexander, after a long break in the correspondence. The Czar's silence made her very apprehensive. "I do not know," she wrote to her father, "whether he is alive or dead. He always *means* well. But the man who signed the Tilsit Treaty can grow weary of good." The ties of friendship had been loosened and it was long before they were again made fast. At last Alexander wrote and Louise was again completely won over. It is almost incomprehensible that, after the intense disappointments experienced, the Queen could still cling to the Czar with admiration. This was apparently so ingrained in her heart that she could not change at once. She was so afraid that in Erfurt he

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might become too intimate with Napoleon that she offered advice at which he may have smiled secretly. It was her "unchanging friendship" that made her venture to do this. "With another man, I know I would risk much, for I have no other right to speak to you in this manner except tender friendship and that upright inalterable interest that you have always shown towards me. These alone embolden me to tell you what cares weigh on my thoughts and my feelings.

"You will see Napoleon again, that man who is, I know, as abhorrent to you as to me, who wants to enslave all, who would seduce those whom he cannot make slaves, to take steps through which they forfeit, somewhat advantageously, what he has never possessed,—namely, the support of public opinion. Dear cousin, I implore you with all the tenderness of which my friendship is capable, to be on your guard with this skillful liar and do give heed to me. I speak only for your sake and for your reputation which I esteem like my own. Do not let yourself be dragged into undertaking anything against Austria." (A German alliance with

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Austria had always been her great desire.) “I am sure that he wishes you to declare against Austria. Do not do it, for God’s sake. By such action you would commit a fault, which, to all intents and purposes, would be irreparable. I am perfectly well aware that you have, since the last war, a grievance against Austria—and justly so. Forget it. Be great. Be forgiving and think of the salvation of Europe while you put aside any personal feeling. If Austria be ruined, the ruin of Europe is certain. Then would come Russia’s turn, and there will be no pity if Russia should then be worsted. Be assured, this infamous Napoleon loves you as he loves me. But why say that to you! I know that you are convinced of it. I am sure that he has plans in his head to which he will try to make you subscribe. Do not do this! Oppose his will, if you can find the slightest point for objection. Act in accordance with your own heart, your own purposes. Once again, do I turn to this heart which possesses all good qualities, which wants the good, and abominates the bad and the unjust. Show him these qualities with firmness and energy. They are mighty.

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You must, you can, thank God, still have plans and wishes which you desire to see carried out. . . . O dear cousin, why cannot my soul accompany you invisibly, in order to be your guardian angel? Hark to my voice. It is that of a friend, equal to none other anywhere. May the world learn to know you through this conference! Reject the devilish plans, give the world laws, dictated by Humanity and which will console the unfortunate. The world judges only according to results. . . .”

Ah, how bitterly she was again disappointed in her “friend.” Alexander had stopped at Königsberg en route to Erfurt. Anxiously Louise had awaited him. Prussian popular opinion of him had long since changed. Louise knew that, but her old liking and admiration still persisted. As for him, he did not feel very comfortable in her presence. He seemed embarrassed and avoided tête-à-têtes. Did he feel at fault? Countess Voss found him as attractive as ever, although weaker and more undecided.

Still he did appear to be fully decided about refusing an alliance with Prussia and Austria against Napoleon. This was made clear in a

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conference with Stein, Goltz and the King. Nevertheless, they expected much from him and he promised to do his best in Erfurt to lighten Prussia's lot. Then on the 19th, he travelled on to Thuringen to his new friend Napoleon. The King and Queen accompanied him a little distance in an open carriage.

The visit left Louise very apprehensive as to his action. How, if Alexander should prove weak and allow himself to be persuaded by Napoleon to join in action against Austria? "May all good spirits attend him," she prayed. She did not really trust him as of old, but she could not bear to acknowledge the extent of her distrust. In the diary of Countess Voss, there is a reference to the fear lest the flattering attitude of Napoleon and the entertaining life at Erfurt might make too much impression on the "poor Czar Alexander" and be very disastrous to Prussian affairs. Events proved that her fears were well founded.

When the Czar left Memel, he was met by a courier from Napoleon who brought the information that at Paris Prince William had yielded everything and had accepted Napoleon's condi-

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tions. Alexander sent the French messenger back to the King. But there was fear of Napoleon's displeasure on account of an unfortunate incident which happened just then. An imprudent letter written, after Dobberan, from Stein to the Prince of Wittgenstein, had been captured by the French. In this letter Stein mentioned secret alliances in Hesse and Westphalia, the purpose of which was to make plans for the liberation of Germany. Napoleon was furious, and had the document printed in the *Moniteur* with severe marginal comments. This letter was to be discussed in the Erfurt negotiations. A bomb thrown into the court at Königsberg would have caused no greater confusion and excitement than this news. Louise was troubled, the King raging. The former feared that Napoleon would insist on the minister's dismissal. Many people in the court circle rejoiced in this probability. Stein's foes intrigued with both the King and Queen in the hopes of alienating them from the minister. But Stein sat firm in his seat. Frederic William did not even permit him to take refuge in the fortress of Pilau during the discussion about him in Erfurt.

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Uncertainty continued for some time. Nothing was reported from Erfurt. On September 27th, the conference between Alexander and Napoleon took place and Louise's thoughts were centred on that event. Praying devoutly that Alexander would be firm and steadfast she awaited his return impatiently. Then rumours of a close relation between Alexander and Napoleon began to drift into Memel. "The two sovereigns were inseparable all day and were very attentive to each other." Information like that was not reassuring. Evidently Alexander had not taken the Queen's friendly advice. Meanwhile, the King had ratified the treaty sent him by Napoleon. He felt bound to do so for fear of unknown and serious consequences if he took an opposite course. Louise saw no possibility of their being able to pay off the enormous debts to Napoleon. She had implored Alexander to induce Napoleon to be more lenient towards Prussia. Frederic William, too, wrote to the Czar: "If Your Majesty does not show generous solicitude for us, it is all up with Prussia."

At last, on October 20th, Alexander himself

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again arrived in Königsberg. His embarrassment had vanished. He was as self-confident as of old—very amiable, and again made his personal charm felt by everyone. . . . He had many conversations with Baron vom Stein and reported his talks with Napoleon and Talleyrand. This latter had quite fascinated him. Stein was to remain. Napoleon did not object. The meeting of the two emperors at Erfurt had this result—Napoleon approved a slight reduction of the war debts, but Alexander had done just what Louise had feared. He had accepted an alliance with Napoleon against Austria and thus left a fresh war threatening at the door!

Yet the Czar was most cordially received in Königsberg. King and Queen were “awfully happy” to see him again. They rejoiced at his presence and, in spite of poverty, there were fêtes and balls. At the end of one of these, the Czar departed for Petersburg in the night of October 23rd–24th, 1808.

At his departure, he invited Louise and Fred-eric William to visit him at the Russian court and both had accepted the invitation gratefully. Unfortunately, this project of a trip to Peters-

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burg proved the cause of Prussia's losing her most competent statesman. There was much discussion between Minister Stein and the King whether such a journey, with all the attendant expense, were practical. They agreed that the idea had better be abandoned. It would be wiser to spend the money on the devastated provinces. Stein thought that the journey should be made honourably, at full expense, or not at all, but that the King should not appear at the Petersburg court as a poor starveling.

But this time Louise vehemently opposed Stein's reasonings. She longed for the journey from a variety of reasons. First, she believed it would be a political advantage for them to be received as the Czar's guests in Petersburg. Secondly, she wanted to see her friend Alexander in his own surroundings and the thought of being a few weeks under his roof was very alluring to her. Third, such a journey, after the stress of two years, offered an attractive change from the misery about her. For a fortnight she would not see or hear anything to fill her with anxiety for the future. And so she was obstinately bent on the visit. She let herself be in-

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fluenced by Stein's personal foe, the Privy Councillor von Nagler, and his friend the Prussian ambassador at Petersburg, Herr von Schladen. As a matter of fact, the entire party of Stein's foes desired nothing better than to see the minister's advice ignored. And as they had a handle against him in the Wittgenstein letter, the opposition triumphed. The Queen obtained her wish and the visit was decided upon. The King was full of indecision and intimated to Stein that, perhaps, he had better resign. His dismissal would, doubtless, have a good effect on Napoleon. Naturally, the minister did not require to be told twice. He resigned and, in November, withdrew to his estates. Louise never saw him again. His foes were triumphant. York, for example, made merry over Stein's discharge. . . . "Our foreign affairs begin to look better. . . . An irrational head has gone; the rest of the adders-dung will dissolve in his poison."

Officially, the dismissal of the prime minister was represented as a "political necessity." Meanwhile Frederic William wrote privately to Stein: "It is certainly very painful for me to be

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obliged to let a man of your type resign—a man who possesses the most just claims to my confidence and who is so vitally trusted by the nation. In any case, these considerations and the consciousness that you have given the first impulse to a better and stronger organization of the structure of the state, ruined as it was, should be to you an immense satisfaction and reassurance.”

It is true that, later, the King asserted that he had never liked Stein. Not long afterwards, Stein was declared by Napoleon, from Madrid, as a foe of France and of the Rhine confederation. This was at the beginning of 1809, and Stein escaped arrest only by flight into Austria.

Louise does not seem to have regretted Stein's retirement although she had so eagerly welcomed his coming. She hoped to see Hardenberg at the helm of affairs. She and the King chanced to encounter him as they were walking in the neighbourhood of Königsberg and on the following day a conference took place. This was prior to Stein's retirement which he advised and Louise agreed that it was desirable. She had turned against the minister and called him a

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vain man. Neither of her clever and intelligent friends, Mme. von Berg nor the Princess Radziwill, could move her in the least in this matter. Unfortunately, it happened occasionally that the Queen allowed herself to be influenced by people whose intrigues she did not perceive. Stein knew this and when he left, he drew up a memorial to call the King's attention to certain conditions in the court and, especially in the Queen's *entourage*. Matters of profound importance were discussed in the privacy of the family and talked over at the Queen's tea-table. Mme. von Berg's rooms were never free from visitors—soldiers, merchants, men of all kinds and opinions. "How is privacy practical in such an establishment?" asked Stein. "It is not possible to keep anything secret and important matters drift into town gossip. . . . It is needful that the court should comprise only persons of assured character and discretion, who deserve to be in the confidence of the rulers." Stein specifically mentioned Nagler, the court marshal, Massow, and Köckritz and then continued, "Let these people be removed, let the visits received by Countess Voss take another turn—

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let her receive only at specific hours on specific days—and be inaccessible at all other times.”

It is possible that another reason which actuated both King and Queen in their desire to make the Petersburg visit was because Napoleon, in his turn, was now demanding their presence in Berlin and had declared that he would consider a prolonged residence in Königsberg as equivalent to a declaration of war. Nothing in the world, however, would have induced Frederic William to enter Berlin under the then existing circumstances. He would have felt as though he were in a mouse-trap in which the French were trying to keep him fast. He could not bear to have the Berlin populace see him return to his capital as a vassal of Napoleon. The Petersburg visit was a welcome pretext for postponing the evil day.

On December 27th, 1808, Louise, the King, Prince William, and Prince Augustus, brother of the dead Louis Ferdinand, left Königsberg and began the journey to the Czar's city. They arrived there on January 7th.

CHAPTER X

THE VISIT TO THE CZAR'S COURT

Arrival at the Russian frontier—The Czar sends a sumptuous escort to meet the royal pair—Entry into Petersburg—Russian hospitality—Splendour, riches and magnificence—The Czarina's diamonds—Conversation with the Czar—Petersburg—Pain at parting—Disappointment—Fresh anxiety in Königsberg—Alexander's French policy—Danger of war—Russian alliance against Austria—Napoleon's victory at Wagram—Louise is apprehensive—Birth of her tenth child—The brother's visit.

FOR the first time in two years, Louise and Frederic William set out on a journey that was not forced, on, what was to them, a pleasure trip. It seemed almost a dream as they left Königsberg behind them and pushed on towards the Russian frontier, without fear of being pursued by Napoleon's army.

They were accompanied only by a few confidential friends. The octogenarian Countess

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Voss was with them, in spite of her age. In addition, the escort consisted of Countess Moltke, General Count Tauentzien, General Scharnhorst, and several young officers of the Court. Prince Augustus and Prince William came later to Petersburg. The weather was frightful; ice and snow impeded their way as they drove through Memel on to the Russian frontier city, Polangen. There they were received by a Russian escort sent thither by the Czar. The details of the expedition are all given in Louise's diary which she kept faithfully through the days of the visit. An interesting glimpse is afforded of the impression made on her by the Sardanapalean riches of the Czar's Court, with its festivals and banquets, its really oriental lavishness and its hospitality. Alexander exerted himself to give to his unfortunate, embarrassed friends a splendid reception in Petersburg,—a city which Louise thought must be second to none in the world. There was a certain element of the barbaric in this ostentatious display of magnificence to the poverty-stricken refugees from Königsberg. It would have been natural if the Prussian royal

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pair had been painfully impressed at the contrast between rich, undevastated Russia and their own desolated land. As a matter of fact Louise never forgot her poor country, but neither she nor the King seem to have felt bitter because fortune had gone against them. Both were so fundamentally simple and unpretending that they regarded the wealth about them as something that went without saying, something that was part and parcel of the existence of their host. They heartily enjoyed every attention offered them, and were enchanted by the novelties that they saw. Louise, to be sure, regretted that she could not hope to return this generous hospitality at Berlin. But we will follow the entries in her daily record.

“When we reached the Russian frontier, there were three Russian officers standing by the Russian landmark. Col. Gorgoli of the Hussars, a Cossack colonel (Lieut. Col. Bowaiski) and a Tartar Prince (Prince Butukow), who was magnificently clad. In Polangen, our carriage was halted before the finest house. At the city gate, a division of Cossacks on foot had awaited us. On the road to the house, was stationed a

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division of Cossack cavalry. In front of the house, there were a large group of generals, officers, chasseurs, etc. General Lieutenant Count Lieven, expressly despatched by the Czar to be escort in chief and to do the honours, delivered to the King a letter from his Sovereign. Then he introduced to me the division-general, Doiguruky, and the brigadier-general, Duca. The Prince was to accompany us as far as the jurisdiction of his division extended.

“We continued our journey. Before us and behind us were cavalry divisions. The Sumeck Hussar regiment, which escorted us from Polangen to a station before Riga, had marched eighty¹ miles in six days—fourteen miles a day, simply because the Czar thought it a fitting escort for the King. Our entreaties to abandon all this ceremony were in vain. . . . At every station where we changed horses, there was a fresh division of cavalry, which did the honours and then escorted us. All the generals, hat in hand, came to our carriage to receive us with the greatest courtesy. . . .”

So it went as far as Riga, and everywhere, the

¹ The German mile is much longer than the English.

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King received the greatest honour. In the cities through which they drove, special theatrical performances were given, parades were held, objects of interest shown. And it all entailed lavish expenditure. The Russian ladies of the aristocracy appeared in costly apparel, and were literally covered with diamonds. Hospitality went riot. The Czar sent his guests rich furs to enable them to endure the Russian cold. He sent Louise dresses which she could wear in Petersburg—among these was a magnificent blue velvet robe trimmed with sable, which was extraordinarily becoming to her blonde beauty. Everywhere that they paused for a space, her appearance excited universal admiration.

In Riga fresh marks of Alexander's thoughtfulness awaited them. "From Riga," writes Louise, "the carriages were on runners and that goes very quickly and well. The journey is very cold and fatiguing. The servants have had noses, backs and chins frozen. Wybel (the Czar's physician) attended to them. The cold is extreme— 22° – 21° in the night, in the day, 18° [Réaumer]. In the carriage, when the

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windows are closed, we had 14°. It surpasses all description. The Czar's beautiful furs are extraordinarily comfortable. His attentiveness is beyond belief. He had an elegant *kibitka* made expressly for us! Every evening there is beer from Petersburg for the King and me because the Czar knows that we like to drink it. In short, nothing is forgotten."

When they were shown at Riga the Guild of the Black Heads, the King remarked to Louise, "I ought to have belonged to this guild. Then thou wouldst have been spared bitter experiences."

"On January 7th, 1809, we left Strelna (pleasure palace of the Grand-Duke Constantine) at 11 A.M. and arrived at a garden near the city gate. Here we were greeted by the Czar, his entire suite, the Czarina's chamberlain, and grand-dukes and grand-duchesses. When we had drunk some hot bouillon, we all proceeded, in order to make our entry. An eight-span gala carriage with seven plate glass windows awaited me."

On the occasion of this formal and official entry into the Russian capital, Louise wore

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costly sable lined with white satin. Her carriage was followed by a number of magnificent state vehicles, in which were the Czar's courtiers, "and so we drove through the streets lined with military to the palace. Forty-six battalions of infantry and four cavalry regiments stood on parade! At the palace, we were received by the two Czarinas and the other imperial highnesses in one of the state salons. The ladies of the court came to greet me at the foot of the staircase. The Czar offered me his arm and we were then received above by the whole court and the city and in the most charming and amiable manner by the Czarinas.

"After we had chatted a few minutes, the Czar asked the King to go down stairs in order to see the troops march by. This lasted for two hours. The Czarinas and I stood at the window on a dais that was covered with scarlet velvet and gold. After the parade was over, I was conducted to my rooms, with really touching amiability, courtesy and cordiality."

Louise immediately won all hearts. Her beauty, her grace, her air of distinction, her modesty and, above all, her geniality, made a

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deep impression. The Czar's Court had heard so much of this Prussian Queen!—and not always to her advantage. It had been said that she was over desirous to please, affected, bent on playing a title rôle. She had coquetted with the Czar in a very conspicuous manner and had thrown herself on his neck. And now came Louise herself in her charming natural fashion—everything in her so harmonious! Not only the gentlemen but the ladies, too, were completely fascinated. One of the latter exclaimed, "She is the fairest of the fair. She is without a rival in the world."

Frederic William, on the other hand, did not make a good impression. He was considered stiff and awkward. He was quite incapable of talking pretty flatteries to the Russian ladies in Alexander's casual manner. As for the Czar, he had resolved to make Louise's visit as perfect as possible. No detail had been neglected in the elaborate preparations. "My apartments are enchanting," she writes. "Out of friendship for me, the Czar had them furnished in the greatest elegance, splendour and with exceptional good taste. Satin draperies, velvet draperies,

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gold trimmings, muslin curtains—all were perfect. It is, however a long way to my abode.¹

“Dead tired from the journey, the reception, the new acquaintances, and the long distance to my room, sick as a dog, I had to make my toilet. I put on the shawl dress given me by the Dowager Czarina. Dinner, a moment’s rest, theatre in the Hermitage . . . supper. And at last to bed. Dead! Little sleep, suffering, nausea, toothache, and every ill.

“On the eighth rose at about eight o’clock. At about eleven, the Czar appeared with the Archduke. Tea as usual, then a visit to the Czarinas, in order to ask how they had slept. The young Czarina’s apartments are charming. She herself is good and gentle, very *avenante* and interesting. The Dowager Czarina has a maternal kindness towards me which is indescribable in words. The palace is simply endless, it is immense. The salons are large and wide, and everything very beautiful—terrifying for weary legs. While I dressed, all the world came to me. I wore gold embroidered muslin with pearls in my hair. Dinner with the Czar and

¹ Louise was lodged in the Hermitage.

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Czarina. Magnificent toilets and music. Theatre, Mlle. George¹ as Amelie in Cinna, wonderful, a masterpiece of art and nature. A head like Niobe. Then supper in our apartments. At last in bed without sleep. I am ill and fear the beginning of a pregnancy. It is hard. I suffer greatly and look frightfully.”

In spite of her *malaise*, Louise had to take part in fatiguing festivities on the following day. The betrothal of the Archduchess Katharina Pawlowna to Prince George of Oldenburg was celebrated on the 13th and the preliminaries,—balls, receptions and dinners that preceded it, a festival for the blessing of the Neva, were all terribly fatiguing. In addition, there were an inspection of the educational institutes founded by the Dowager Czarina, fêtes in the winter palace and the Taurische palace, theatrical performances in the Hermitage—all these required an exertion to which the Queen was hardly equal. She did not sleep, was feverish, had dreadful toothaches and was pretty thoroughly exhausted. But

¹ Marguerite George, a famous French actress, had been Napoleon's mistress and was received in Russia with enthusiasm.

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she was relentlessly dragged on in the vortex of this vivacious and strenuous court. The climax came on the 19th when the Czar held a Court function. "It is impossible to describe it. Many salons filled with military, stationed in companies. The Czar presented everyone himself. . . . It rained diamonds. . . . Magnificence of every kind surpasses all conception. The show of silver, bronze, crystal, paintings, and marble statues is simply enormous. And all the grandiose details appropriate to the empire are most august and splendid. William says that Paris and its display are nothing in comparison."

Alexander had assigned three ladies of the Petersburg aristocracy as escorts and companions of Louise. They were Princess Wolkonsky, Princess Bieloselsky and the Countess Tolstoi. Besides this, she was specially attended by a page and certain officers of Alexander's House Guard. Louise was really spoiled with gifts and surprises. Almost every day she received some present from the Dowager Czarina, or from Czarina Elizabeth or from the Czar himself. Now it was a costly robe, now a shawl,

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again an ornament of some kind. For her drives about the city, Alexander had given her a charming vehicle. The impression of opulence in general was something that Louise had never before experienced. One day, the Dowager Czarina showed her her jewels. Louise was taken into a salon filled with tables upon which were heaped diamonds and of "such a size!" Louise felt as though she were in a tale of the *One Thousand and One Nights*. To her everything was novel and marvellous—the music at table, the fairy-like illumination of the dining-rooms, the Cossack dances, the gold plate table service, the incredible splendour at the betrothal of the Grand-Duchess, at which the Dowager Duchess appeared in a robe embroidered with pure gold and where thirty-eight polonaises were danced! The city itself seemed to Louise fine beyond compare. "Athens cannot be more beautiful. Petersburg is so splendid, so ornate, the buildings are in such a grand style, the canals so big that it is impossible to imagine them. It is a city unlike any other."

In the midst of all this grand entertainment, there was no opportunity for Louise to have a

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private talk with the Czar. Alexander came to tea with her for a few minutes only and was invariably surrounded by a numerous train. And all the time Louise was longing to discuss certain details that preoccupied her thoughts. Sorrow for her desolated country often brought tears to her eyes, in spite of all the pomp about her.

Finally, on the 15th, her wish was granted. The Czar came to the King at a moment when the Queen was in the room. She seized the opportunity to mention their affairs. But the conversation left her terribly depressed. "Ah, Future, why dost thou oppress my heart? And why do tears of sadness rise to my eyes?" Then a letter arrives from her father. What joy! "In my thoughts, I kiss his hands and worship him as always. Grandmama, the uncle, my sisters, united and absent, George, Karl—I love you all and often think of you." Then she harks back to the kindness of the Czar's whole family. "They are so gentle, so tender for a heart broken by misfortune. The Dowager Czarina is just like a mother to me. The Czarina Elizabeth is good, gentle, like a friend."

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In spite of all the affection and solicitude shown to her, the Petersburg visit brought no rest or refreshment for Louise. She was in wretched physical condition, suffering from a cold and fever. She coughed and had severe pains in her chest. On the 23rd, she drove in an open sleigh, the thermometer at 30° below zero, to a wonderful display of fireworks. In consequence, she had fever on the following day, but could not nurse herself as she felt obliged to attend a musical given by the Czar in the evening.

On the 25th, she did have one interesting conversation with Alexander. Then there were but a few days more before the parting hour struck. Her heart was heavy as lead and she wrote on January 31st: "Short night's rest to five o'clock. Out of bed at six o'clock. Packed . . . finally left my room with a profound sigh. I did not enter it again. I betook myself to the King. The Czar came. He brought seven shawls with him—one for me, three for Therese and three for Frederica. The Czarina Elizabeth waited for me in the corridor. When I was told, I flew to her and

into her arms. She was very sad. She gave me a ring and a signet . . . my heart was very heavy. Thereupon, we all betook ourselves to the Dowager Czarina's apartments where was also the Grand-Duke Nicholas. . . . When we returned, the Archduchesses put my furs about my shoulders and the dreadful leave-taking began. I wept and felt like fainting. Before dinner, a short conversation with the Czar. After dinner came the terrible farewell. Tears on all sides. The Dowager Czarina blessed me: I thought I would sink to her feet. The Czarina Elizabeth held me in her arms and shed tears over me. The grand-duchesses overwhelmed me with tenderness. Marie wept and was pale as death. I was flooded with gratitude and disturbed by one thought only,—‘Thou returnest to thy troubles.’ So we descended the stairs. The Dowager Czarina and all the rest came to our carriage. It was frightful. The Czar Alexander could hardly speak. I could only stammer out the words—‘I put my fate and that of my children in your hands and commend to you all that is dear to me. You are our pillar.’

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“And so amidst a thousand tears, into the carriage. The Czarina Elizabeth withdrew in pain, the Dowager Czarina blessed me, wept and made the sign of the cross on the carriage and on us when we found the window again,¹ in order to wave; thus it went. The King wept, I sobbed. The Grand-Duke rode by the side of the carriage. At the place where our escort was changed, we paused and he took his leave. The Czar had followed us. He left his sleigh in order to embrace us once more. Then the carriage door was closed and all was at an end. We saw no more of this charming family. Tears of gratitude coursed down our cheeks. Behind us lay Petersburg, with its riches, its splendour, but our hearts will never forget what was done for us there as true friends and kinsfolk.”

Yet, in spite of all the beauty that Louise had enjoyed and wondered at, in spite of the fêtes and the magnificence, in her inner consciousness, she was not satisfied with the journey. She was, indeed, grateful for, and touched by, the

¹ There were so many windows that it was difficult to identify the Czarina's apartment.

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cordiality with which the Czarinas, Marie and Elizabeth, had received her and for the friendship with these two eminent women which they kept up from that time on. This intimate relation was a real happiness, but in her heart she was much grieved about Alexander. With him she was completely disillusioned. In Petersburg, in the midst of the turmoil of the court life, she had recognised his superficiality and his shallowness. That amiability and chivalry, that warm-heartedness and cordiality, which she had taken for qualities of the soul were all on the outside, assumed as a quality of his yielding, ingratiating character. Louise had taken him too seriously. The perception of this fact was for her a bitter experience. She had seen how unhappy the Czarina Elizabeth was at his side, while he was treating the Princess Narischkin openly as his *inamorata* and she was fêted as such. He had avoided tête-à-têtes with Louise, and had carefully evaded serious conversation with her so that only once had she found an opportunity really to touch on political matters with him. This was not her Alexander,—the idol of the Memel days, whom she had worshipped and

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honoured. How he had changed! She had cradled herself in dreams of Alexander's interest in them and in Prussia,—of his readiness to do what he could in their behalf. All vanished to nothingness! She was wounded in her personal and in her political sensibilities. She could hardly overcome this disappointment. Yes, in truth, Alexander had vanished from her heart for ever. Never again did she write to him as she had written formerly. Never again did she in her letters discuss public affairs with him. Her attitude was, henceforth, almost contemptuous. She shook herself free of him as of something unpleasant. The King did not share her sentiments in this regard. He actually clung more closely to the Czar after the Petersburg visit than before, while the Queen was drifting farther and farther from her old friend. In bitter irony she wrote to Frau von Berg: "My journey has cured me of a certain illusion and you shall receive a ring from me with a star and the words 'It is set.'"

On the other hand, her friendship with the two Czarinas, the unfortunate Elizabeth and the Czar's mother, grew more and more intimate.

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With them alone, she discussed him in her letters and spoke of what he could do for the future of his people. "The Czar could save Europe," she wrote to Elizabeth. "I was on the point of writing to him, to this effect. But after ripe consideration, I told myself that my letter would vanish like the stars before the sun, together with the memorial of a Rumiantzow [the Russian chancellor]."

She knew by experience that her advice to him bore no fruits. As she expressed it to Frau von Berg, she was no longer blind. No advantage whatsoever accrued to Louise from the Petersburg visit, least of all in her health. One ball after another, one interesting sight after another in the cold Russian climate did not suit her fragile constitution. On the third day after her return to Königsberg, she was obliged to go to bed. She looked wretched and pale from the combined effects of the exertions of the past weeks, the many sleepless nights and the pain and physical discomfort that came from the pregnancy. Her beautiful great blue eyes were dimmed in their brilliancy. The smile that was habitual to her lips had given way to a bitter

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expression. She bore her sorrows in silent resignation. Her apprehensions were justified. Fresh anxieties, fresh sorrow awaited her in Königsberg. Her life was still full of deprivation.

And what had they to show for the Petersburg visit? As Louise had attained nothing in Tilsit, so, too, she brought nothing, absolutely nothing from Russia, as far as alleviation of Prussia's difficulties was concerned. On the contrary, Alexander had not concealed the fact that he was accepting the French alliance and that if it seemed desirable, he would take arms against Austria. Even during the stay of the royal pair in Petersburg, he had spoken pretty plainly to General Caulaincourt, the ambassador of Napoleon, and said, among other things: "I have given both [Louise and the King] to understand that they must accept the French policy unconditionally, for in that way only can they assure peace, resume possession of their State and gain a certain influence in political events. . . . The King and the Queen will not leave Petersburg except with the firm resolve to follow the course dictated to them by their own interest as well as by the interest of their

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children. And I can assure you that they both accept this point of view, especially the King."

A few days later, he spoke again to Caulaincourt and said: "The King and I have discussed politics only twice. What he said the first time, I have already told you. To-day, he expressed the same opinions. Everything that he has seen and heard has shown him how closely attached I am to the policy of Emperor Napoleon. The King is more than ever convinced that it will further his interest to attach himself irrevocably to this policy."

Less than ever could Louise now expect a change in Prussian conditions through the Czar's help. She felt that ruin was imminent. A dark future seemed to lie before her. War with Austria was imminent and the spectre of Prussia being forced to an alliance against Austria haunted her and worried her, day and night. Even so, that Russia could attack "the poor Austrians"—that seemed incredible! What would become of Germany, what of Prussia, if Napoleon had nothing more to fear? His dynasty would be supreme. Thus he had declared a few years earlier in the *Paris Moniteur*.

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This thought frightened her so that she wrote to her friend, Frau von Berg, "To-day I have again lived through a day, a day when the world and its sins presses heavily on me. I am ill, and I believe that I shall not recover as long as things go as they are now. War against Austria will surely come,—that the whole world knows, but what they do not know is that Russia, through her alliance with Napoleon, will be forced to begin the war jointly with France. Just measure the consequences which that may have for us—forcing us, if it goes so far, to accept this decision! Prussia against Austria! What will become of Germany? No, I cannot express what I feel, my breast might burst! And we here in this banishment, in this climate, where the storms rage, distant from all that is ours! O God, is this ordeal not sufficient?" In the men on whom she had staked all her hope, she could no longer believe. "I am prepared for anything, it is only God's mercy that keeps me strong, just the belief in Him and His providence,—for I count no longer on human assistance."

In Königsberg, they were incredibly dis-

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couraged. The King could not make up his mind to return to Berlin, although it would have been wiser, as his presence in the capital might have had a beneficial effect on the public sentiment. Schill's¹ enterprise enraged him and he held L'Estayer and Tauentzien responsible for it as they had not hindered the "madness" as he deemed it. He tried by good counsel to calm the war spirit of Austria and, on the whole, he looked through Alexander's spectacles. While the King was avoiding being dragged into the war, the greatest enthusiasm reigned at Berlin and there was readiness on all sides to take the field with Austria to free Germany from domination. The thought of a revolt against the alien

¹Ferdinand-Baptista von Schill, b. Jan. 6th, 1773, near Pless. He entered a Prussian Hussar regiment in 1788, was wounded at Auerstadt in 1806. After his recovery, 1807, he raised a volunteer corps of 1000 men and tried to defend the fortress of Kalberg. After the Peace of Tilsit, he was made commander of two Hussar regiments in Berlin. He then resolved to make an effort to renew hostilities with Napoleon on his own account. Under the pretext of a field manœuvre, and without the King's knowledge, he led his troops from Berlin towards the Elbe—a number of officers and a company of jägers followed him. But the little force met opposition in Wittenberg. Saxony was unsympathetic towards the enterprise and Schill turned to Anhalt. His audacity had [no result. Frederic William was indignant at the unauthorised expedition and refused to countenance it. It all came to grief. Schill was killed at Stralsund, May 31st. Eleven officers were taken prisoners and shot, September 16th, 1809.

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control already had deep roots. But the moment for breaking loose had not yet come. The Austrian Archdukes, Karl, Johann, and Ferdinand, at last advanced, and active hostilities between Austria and France were in full swing! The call of the Archdukes and of Emperor Francis had met enthusiastic response. Never before had the words *Freedom, Unity and German Nation* been uttered so boldly! There seemed to be warrant for jubilation.

As far as Frederic William and Louise were concerned, the threatening storm seemed to pass by. Prussia was not forced into an alliance against Austria; on the contrary, after a long hesitation on the King's part, a *rapprochement* was made between the two states which somewhat reassured the Queen. But Russia acted "badly and without faith." On May 12th, the news reached Königsberg that the Czar had declared war on Austria. True, it proved to be only a show of war, but this gesture was to Louise painful. The *rapprochement* of Austria and Prussia was evinced, a few days later, in the intimation sent by Frederic William to Archduke Ferdinand that he would take

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Austria's part "as soon as he had finished his preparations and his army was in a condition to act."

It was evident that there was no real chance of success in such a war, but Louise was relieved by the mere promise to aid Austria. As usual, the King wavered in his resolution, especially when Alexander advised against the connection with Austria. His indecision was always uppermost when prompt action was needed. He thought it might be better to wait until Austria had won a victory over Napoleon! The success at Aspern bore no fruits, and this increased the pessimism of Frederic William.

Then came Napoleon's victory at Wagram and fresh anxiety for Louise. On June 10th, 1809, the French were again before the gates of Vienna as victors. On July 18th the Truce of Zwain was accepted. Austria was ruined. "It is all over with us. Austria sings her swan song—and then 'Farewell, Germany,'" sighed Louise.

These events had affected her health very seriously. She suffered from asthma, from daily accesses of fever and unbearable cramps in the chest. On account of her illness and the events

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in Austria, the removal to Berlin was delayed. The King felt safer in Königsberg than Berlin, for he was deadly afraid of Napoleon's treating the Hohenzollerns as he had the Spanish royal family. It was decided that the queen's confinement should take place first. Then they would make the move. She was so ill that Hufeland felt that she could not endure the journey. On October 4th she gave birth to her tenth child, Prince Albert. Frederica was with her and nursed her tenderly, for her recovery was slow. The presence of her sister, Hufeland's solicitous care and the hope of being back in Berlin were, however, sufficient to bring her through those hard weeks.

A little earlier than this, George had been in Königsberg. His meeting with his sister after the long separation was very touching. "We had no words, only tears," wrote the Prince to his sister, Charlotte von Hildburghausen. "I have never seen anything more pathetic, anything more beautiful than Louise."

The Queen had made this journey possible for her brother by sending him a thousand thalers from her savings, for George was very

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short of funds. "I had saved this sum to help the poor unfortunate in Berlin, but am I not also unfortunate?" The gift was not, however, to come to the knowledge of the King. They were in straits themselves. A few months earlier, they had been obliged to sell plate and jewels in order to liquidate a portion of the indemnity levied by Napoleon. Out of all her ornaments Louise had retained only her pearls. "They suit me better," she said. "Pearls signify tears." And tears she had shed in abundance.

CHAPTER XI

RETURN HOME AND DEATH

Napoleon demands the presence of the King in Berlin—Louise's apprehensions—Entry into Berlin—Joy—New court life—Louise's conversation at a ball with Wittgenstein—Napoleon's hard conditions—The question of the cession of Silesia—Louise and Wittgenstein repudiate the Cabinet's plan—Hardenberg recalled—A new Prussian policy—The germs of the movement for freedom from foreign domination—Louise's memorial—Queen's journey to Hohenzieritz—Joyous reunion with her father and grandmother—King's visit—Beginning of Louise's illness—It increases—At the Queen's deathbed.

NOT until November, 1809, does Frederick William seem to have seriously envisaged the return to Berlin. At least the Queen wrote to her brother that they would probably start from Königsberg on the 14th or 15th December, so that they would arrive in the capital about the 23rd. The political horizon, however, was a trifle brighter.

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Napoleon seemed rather more peaceably disposed towards Prussia, without abating in the least the war indemnity.

Peace was made between France and Austria. Thus Napoleon had to his credit a fresh triumph. The King was now ready to make new overtures in the hopes of bettering his own lot. In November, he sent Krusemarck to Paris with congratulations and at the same time with a petition for a decrease of the indemnity. Napoleon's reception of the Prussian envoy was not unfriendly, but he insisted, almost threateningly, on the King's return to Berlin. On this occasion, he referred to Louise in terms of admiration. He expressed his astonishment that the Queen, with her intellect and cleverness, had not been able to give a more favourable turn to matters. Using almost the same words that he uttered later at St. Helena, he said to Krusemarck, "If she had come earlier to Tilsit, that is before matters were decided, I could, perhaps, have come to an understanding with her." A small consolation, indeed, for Louise!

It would have been stupid to antagonise Napoleon any further and so the return to

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Berlin was definitely decided on. Louise was quite "wretched from felicity" at the prospect of seeing after an absence of four years her dear old Berlin, her Charlottenberg, Potsdam, Paretz, and all the places where she had been once happy. She recalled her first glimpses of the towers of Berlin, when her carriage had turned left from the bridge and began to ascend the ramp of the castle. Her heart was convulsed with happiness but also with anxiety for, in spite of her joy, she feared new misfortunes. Prussia's situation in relation to France was not fundamentally changed. Napoleon had not really receded from his exactions. He had, indeed, remarked to Krusemarck, that he would not declare war on Prussia on account of "that brigand and thief Schill," nor would he demand any territorial cession. But the enormous war debt must be paid in full. Dark forebodings haunted Louise. What would he still insist upon?

Such were the thoughts that floated in her brain on the long uncomfortable journey from Königsberg to Berlin. So the joy in the homecoming was not complete. But when she

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caught sight of the gay faces of the Berliners these troubled reflections vanished and she gave herself up entirely to the felicity of the return. In Freuenwalde, she was greeted by a merry torchlight procession of the miners and escorted to the castle of the late dowager queen where they spent the night of December 22nd-23rd. And on the morrow, the Hohenzollerns were again in the Prussian capital.

Just as on her first entry as bride of the Crown Prince, the population rushed to meet Louise with indescribable exultation. The citizens had presented her with a magnificent carriage. It was lined with lilac velvet and richly ornamented with silver. The eight horses had silver harness. Louise wore a beautiful ermine-trimmed velvet dress of the same colour as the carriage lining. Two of her children were with her, the Princess Charlotte and Prince Karl, besides her niece, Princess Frederica and old Countess Voss. Frederic William was on horseback, and his two sons marched as officers at the head of their respective regiments.

Midst the jubilation of the crowd, the procession reached the palace, in Unter den Linden,

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where Louise's whole family, all the Princes and Princesses of the Court, were assembled. The pleasantest surprise for the Queen was that her father was there and the first to greet her. Emotion was overwhelming as she drove into the familiar surroundings. She threw herself sobbing into the arms of her old father and wept freely.

She was again at home! Around her were beaming faces. Everyone wanted to show affection. But infinite sympathy was mingled with this joy. It was evident that the Queen had suffered, that she had passed painful hours in the banishment and there was a determined effort to make her forget the experience. "How sweet it is to be so much loved," wrote Louise a few days later to Frau von Berg.

"One feels better here," she said. With unspeakable pleasure, she walked through the castle rooms and made special greetings to many a remembered object. All was unchanged, and yet "so different!" On the evening of this exciting day, Louise drove about the city which was gaily illuminated, and rejoiced over the jubilation and enthusiasm of the populace.

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On the morrow, she and the entire court attended a Thanksgiving service at the Cathedral, and on Christmas Eve, a festival performance of Glück's *Iphigenia in Aulis* was given at the Opera. When the Queen appeared in the royal box, a shout rang through the house. Ladies and gentlemen stood up on their seats and waved their handkerchiefs, shouting out greetings and hurrahs.

In the palace there were festivities. Court life began again. Foreign dignitaries and envoys came to bring their good wishes to the royal pair. New Year, 1810, was celebrated in all magnificence with a pompous court function. But it was not a gay day. It was painful because the King and Queen again met people whose behaviour in times of misfortune had been equivocal. Yet, even these did not hesitate to appear and to flatter the returned monarch. Louise speedily overcame her agitation. When she entered the Rittersaal, all eyes were fixed upon her. She was very simply dressed in a velvet robe of violet—her favourite colour. It was not embroidered, nor did she wear diamonds. Pearls in her hair and about her neck

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were her only ornaments. And for that very reason, she looked the more lovely.

All January was devoted to dinners, receptions, balls, theatrical entertainments, audiences to envoys and ministers, with visits, and kindred ceremonies. On the 18th, the anniversary of the coronation of Frederic I, occurred the first celebration of the founding of the Order of the Red Eagle. But this new institution was not at all pleasing to the Berliners, as it was considered an imitation of similar fraternal orders in Petersburg. Since the war, the populace had developed a critical spirit that, formerly, had not been very apparent. In 1808, Stein had said: "In the nation there should be a repugnance for everything foreign," and these words were quoted now, and seemed to have taken root, especially in relation to Russia. A Prussian popular spirit was alert. This was evident in quite insignificant things.

In the midst of this resumed social life, Louise was supremely anxious about the continued existence of the sovereignty. She still felt that it was quite possible that the King might lose his throne, might be torn from his people. At

the celebration of her birthday for the first time since their return to the capital, the King had, without her knowledge, ordered that ceremonial court should be held in the White Salon of the Berlin Palace. "Ah," she thought, "this is the end of my worldly dignity." She doubted whether her birthday would be ever celebrated again so sumptuously.

All through Europe, thrones were tottering. The Spaniards had gained nothing in their revolt against an alien dictator. Yes, the victories of Napoleon were sealed not only by the robbery of territory but also by the destruction of dynasties. The rumour of his marriage to an Austrian archduchess was speedily confirmed by the preparations for the nuptials. The Austrian Emperor's daughter—a Hapsburg Princess to become his wife! Napoleon had wooed in Russia, but his overtures were met by the fierce opposition of the Dowager Czarina. Louise shuddered at the thought that he might have proposed for her eldest daughter and rejoiced that this child was born dead. She would have been just sixteen. And if such demand had come, how could the King, in his subordinated

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position, have dared to give a refusal to the mighty one? How could he have declined to say "yes" to him on whom depended the prosperity of his subjects—the chances of liberation from want and misery?

"Just think vividly, dear father, and thank God with me that he has let this cup pass from the good King and myself."

That Austria herself had taken the first steps to bring about this marriage, never entered Louise's head. "Truly the time is come to weep tears of blood because it is come so far with man, with misery on earth."¹

In addition to her political troubles, the Queen was greatly concerned about her children. The Crown Prince, especially, was a source of worry to her. His passionate, unrestrained temperament made his mother fear for him an unhappy future, and his tutor Delbrück had not proved adequate to his task. He was dismissed and Louise appointed Ancillon as his successor—a step already advised by Alexander.

¹ The words are:—"Im Grunde genommen ist es, um blutige Tränen zu weinen, dass es so weit gekommen ist mit den Menschen, mit dem Jammer auf Erden."

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She was constantly preoccupied with the intellectual development of her children. She took as her guide Pestalozzi, whom she had diligently studied in Königsberg. She was greatly stimulated by his romance, *Lienhard und Gertrud*, and his educational theories seemed to her worthy of being adopted in Prussia. In Russia, she had admired the educational institution of the Dowager Czarina—a significant enterprise. She hoped to be able to call into life something similar for her own land. Unfortunately, death surprised her before these plans could be carried out.

In the spring, the King moved out to his favourite Potsdam. The Queen accompanied him, although her little Louise was down with pleurisy in Berlin and she hated to leave her, and was equally reluctant to let the King be alone in Potsdam. So she divided her time between him and the sick child. Every day she drove into Berlin and then back to her husband, fatiguing and cold though the expedition was in the chill weather. The result was that Louise, too, fell ill. She was attacked by fever and a cough and was obliged to keep her

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bed for several days. The asthma from which she had suffered periodically for years, increased. The King had decided that it would be wise to take his wife back to Berlin, when Louise suddenly recovered. Her convalescence was rapid and they remained in Potsdam.

The future did not look rosy. Napoleon continued to press energetically for the complete payment of the war debts and it was impossible to secure such enormous sums from an impoverished people. The loans which the King and his ministers tried to raise, failed. They kept on hoping for milder terms. In January, Krusemarck obtained an audience with the French Emperor. Napoleon received him but was rather grumpy, and not at all inclined to be conciliatory. "If the King of Prussia cannot pay, he must cede a province. If that does not suit him, he can hand over his domains to me." He had his eyes fixed on Silesia.

Again, good counsel was costly. No one knew what to do. Altenstein had the weakness to advise the cession of Silesia as he saw no other way of satisfying Napoleon. The Queen was indignant. She was again quite ready to inter-

fere. She was even not disinclined to make a journey to Paris in order to plead the Prussian cause, as the French ambassador in Berlin—Saint-Marsan—thought that she might have some influence on Napoleon. He suggested that possibly even a letter from Louise to Napoleon might be useful. She wrote and sent the letter through her sister, Therese, who was living in Paris. Naturally, there was not the slightest result from this communication. Napoleon still insisted on the immediate liquidation of the indemnity, or the cession of territory. After all the injuries that he had inflicted upon the King and upon Prussia, he regarded them as his personal foes and he had so intimated through Krusemarck.

At this epoch, the old martial spirit was again astir in Louise. She felt the necessity of adopting extreme measures. A revolt in Prussia, advised by Stein, seemed to her, too, as the one means of breaking free from the tyrant. Yes, the war-spirit was alert, but this time Louise was more prudent. She no longer went direct to the goal. The interference in the events of 1805-06 had cost her too much sorrow

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and too many tears. The responsibility that then came upon her had been too heavy. This time, she did not wish to show her hand or to let it be known that she used her influence to induce her husband to approve an uprising. He might have consented as he himself was indignant at the weakness of his ministers. When the news arrived from Paris, he exclaimed, "I have always said that they were committing stupidities, that they were no good, and possessed the confidence neither of the public nor myself." At another moment, he thought he could not find better ministers. His mind just wavered back and forth without his being able to grasp a decision.

And so once more it was Louise who took the initiative, and effected the turning point in the Prussian policy. Among the guests at the celebration of her birthday was Prince Wittgenstein, her former adviser in many a political stress. He might help her now. As she danced with him, she spoke of Napoleon's exactions and of the incredible weakness of the Minister Altenstein in advising the cession of Silesia. At the same time, she begged the prince to bring

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his financial genius into play and to devise a scheme of raising the indemnity and saving Silesia. Wittgenstein had been in a bank at Cassel and was a financier of ability.

He really did find a way out. On the morrow of the ball, he had a plan ready and presented a memorial to the Queen. He proposed that 25,000 Prussian citizens should contribute 4000 thalers apiece, partly in cash, partly in State bonds. This sum was to be declared as a national debt and be the basis for a national bank. In this fashion, the indemnity to Napoleon could be liquidated.

He talked over the project with the Queen, who approved. Before putting it into execution, Hardenberg was to be consulted. At the moment he was in Hanover. This gave the Queen a suggestion. How fine it would be if Hardenberg were again to assume responsibility for affairs. That seemed a wise solution and Louise exerted herself to persuade the King to call Hardenberg to the helm. This was no simple matter as Napoleon's consent to the appointment would have to be obtained. As he hated Hardenberg, there was little hope of



FREDERIC WILLIAM III AND LOUISE
From an engraving by F. W. Nettleing after C. Hampe

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his yielding the point. The King and Queen proposed a secret conference with the ex-minister but he pointed out how dangerous it would be if an unacknowledged interview were to come to Napoleon's ears. "I must avoid giving a pretext for any fresh calamity," was his opinion. Finally, however, one meeting was held in all privacy on April 14th at Beeskow, whither the King had gone ostensibly to inspect the Russians who were returning home from France. On that occasion the Queen was not present, but at the beginning of May, all three conferred together on Peacock Island.

Louise left no stone unturned in her efforts to secure a Hardenberg ministry. She honoured him as a father. He was the most human of all the ministers,—an exceptionally clever man with a clear intellect. "His penetrating vision pierced through all obstacles which obscured the end he had in view. At the outset, he considered carefully whether they were surmountable. If he were convinced that they were stubborn checks to progress, he would leave them out of the game and would attain his purpose by another method. He had travelled much

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and observed much in various courts so that he had close acquaintance with many sovereigns. He knew their secret desires, their hidden motives, the influence of their *entourage*, male and female. He had passed, unembarrassed, through intrigues as though they were non-existent. He acted as if he did not see them—and yet he saw and knew everything. He was, in short, a highly intelligent man, yet, too, an excellent dissembler and quite able to act a rôle on occasions. He was a born diplomat, shrewd, smooth, polished and skilled in handling a situation. He abandoned the well-trodden ways of routine and hated dead letters and control.” This brilliant characterisation from the pen of a contemporary fits Hardenberg’s personality perfectly. He was the man whom Prussia needed, together with a Stein and a Scharnhorst. Louise had recognised this earlier when Hardenberg rose like a meteor on Prussia’s political heaven.

Without Napoleon’s endorsement, he was, however, quite unwilling to interfere in Prussian affairs. Through Saint-Marsan, he let Napoleon know that he was willing to enter into close

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connection with the French system and to see to it that all obligations of Prussia towards France were duly fulfilled.

Before the new cabinet was actually formed, Louise, herself, drew up a memorial which proves her intelligent grasp of many things. But it was her last great political act. She was not to live to see the fulfilment of the wishes expressed in the document. Not until much later were her ideas, inspired by a new spirit, to be realised.

"I start from the principle," she writes, "that the man who resigns himself to the thought that Prussia is lost, is a person who will be of no assistance in great changes and it is the most erroneous point of view that one can have and can rightfully be called a petty standpoint. . . . Unfortunately in our time, pessimism has gone so far that it is needful to be prepared for all; but whoever thinks the most pessimistic things and makes [that thought] the guide of his actions, that same person—especially if he be one of the men at the head of affairs—fails entirely with the responsibilities that have been placed upon him. Instead of working to help, he helps to bring disaster.

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“A true servant of the state must be inspired with zeal, first to discover ways and means, and secondly to put these into practice in order to meet the exactions which are levied on the state, so that all pretext may vanish, which could, in any way, justify hostile measures against the state. He must proceed from the only true point of view, that, above all, *Nationality* must be saved, that the Nation must stake all in order to remain united under the sceptre of a virtuous King: that in order to enjoy this privilege and this fortune, it [the Nation] must be ready to make sacrifices.”

Altenstein's wretched cabinet did not, however, take Louise's words to heart. The old jog-trot routine went on. Altenstein was overthrown only after persistent efforts of Louise and Wittgenstein. Napoleon had intimated through the French ambassador in Berlin that he had nothing against Hardenberg's appointment and so the latter, for the second time, took the reins of the state,—after violent opposition from the King who was willing enough to have Hardenberg, but who thought he could at the same time retain Altenstein, Beyme and Nagler.

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Louise was happy at the success of this enterprise. Her joy was great at having at last secured for King and country the co-operation of a "clever and superior man." There was no more fear that Silesia would have to be ceded. Gratefully did the Queen write to the new prime minister, "I am much calmer since I know that you are to be at the head of everything." This time, too, Frau von Berg was not without some part in politics. Next to Stein, Hardenberg was her ideal and just as Louise had influenced her husband in this connection, Frau von Berg had turned the scale with the Queen. She was unremitting in her endeavour "to seize a moment," when Louise's nerves were not too unstrung, in order to interest her in the political situation as it prevailed at the moment. Whenever she could, she tried to discuss passing conditions with the Queen. In court circles, Frau von Berg was regarded as an intriguer. She did not permit herself to be frightened by that. But, occasionally, Louise's fragile health discouraged her in her political propaganda. "Then my strength failed me and my heart bled at being obliged to burden her

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with painful thoughts when I saw her already so terribly depressed," she wrote.

The Queen herself, however, repeatedly succeeded in overcoming her physical weakness. Too often she strained her slender powers in order not to be obliged to stop half-way. But her strength was inadequate for her to be an *ægis* to her people as her brother George had hoped she might become.

Louise's health was, indeed, shattered. She needed a complete change. Gladly would she have gone to Pyrmont, which had benefited her before. But the necessary money was lacking. As an alternative, she thought she might at least make the long-talked-of visit to her father at Strelitz. Now that state affairs were in such good hands, it did not seem so difficult to leave the King for a short time. There was no immediate need for her assistance and he was willing to let her go. Louise rejoiced that she could announce her coming to her father. "I am coming—on Monday, I am coming. I am to stay Tuesday and Wednesday alone and then the King will come and remain over Thursday and Friday. On Saturday he wishes

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to go to Rheinsberg; I will spend Sunday with you and on Monday he will take me back! Halleluja!" And how joyously she shared this news with her three sisters who were then visiting her father! It seemed as though a ban had been lifted since she felt that Prussia was not totally ruined. The old gaiety bubbled up anew in her letter to Frederica and George. It needed so little to put Louise in good spirits, to animate her natural vivacity! In ecstasy, like a wanton child for whom an unexpected pleasure—a pleasure not recently experienced—was being prepared, Louise writes:

"I am so happy when I think that I shall see you and the good grandmama at Strelitz in about a week, that I could get actual 'Crampolini.' But I check my joy because so often when I have let myself overflow with too much happiness, something contrariwise has happened and any such crossing and thwarting would be just too dreadful now. Old Martin [steward in her father's castle] is undoubtedly going about with his leather apron and measuring rod through the whole castle, rides breathless to Hohenzieritz and comes back, saying:

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‘I have found quarters for everyone.’ Thou and Frederica, and thou, George, *ihr tut brill* ‘aber Georg,’ ‘just hear Frederica,’ goes on the live-long day. Halleluja! . . . Husasa tralala, soon I am with you. . . . Bonnyclabber and strawberries the King will have for tea, even if the last in thy climate [?] are not quite red; don’t tell Papa because he would worry. When the Rex comes it will cost me nothing except room attendance which is not to be refused as for once I am very generous. Mon Dieu, je suis mad, I have so much to tell you all. The good old lady [the grandmother]. Had I only enough money to take her and Frederica to Carlsbad, mais je suis une pauvre. If I only had the half million which Marie Louise’s room in Compiègne cost. . . . I am not yet advanced except in the luck which will speedily unite me to you. . . . To-day is warm and windy and in my head it looks as in an illuminated raree-show. All windows are brightly lighted with yellow, red and blue curtains. Hussa! The little devil,—Adieu! Now I will write to grand-mama in a rational manner. Your Louise.”

It was long since the Queen had been so happy

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and so merry. She was overjoyed. On the day of her departure, amidst laughter and jesting she gave little gifts to everyone of her circle. For the most part these were things that she had already used, for she had no money to buy new presents. In the afternoon, guests came to tea. Then she went for a walk on the terrace of the Charlottenburg palace with her whole company, to the satisfaction of the spectators, who had gathered before the palace. They did not suspect that they were looking at their Queen for the last time. And it chanced that on that day Louise appeared especially charming. She wore a large new straw hat, which was very becoming, and a blue silk dress. When the guests took their leave, Louise and Frederic William supped in the garden, alone. It was a cool evening. Louise was a little chilled but she paid no attention to the feeling. Later, she thought that she had taken cold on that last evening in Charlottenburg.

June 25th was the day of her departure. In the morning at six o'clock she said good-bye at the King's bedside and then entered her travelling carriage and drove joyously away.

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Yet an inexplicable anxiety and sadness came over her when she reached the frontier of Strelitz. She was for the time overpowered by the feeling but it soon passed when she found the whole family in Fürstenburg to welcome her. The grandmother, who was not well, was the only one missing. It was a beautiful meeting. With the exclamation, "Ah, there is my father," Louise flew into the Duke's arms. In the evening they all arrived at Strelitz. At the castle door, she greeted her grandmother. They had not met since 1806. Trembling, the old lady embraced this favourite foster child who had passed through so much sorrow.

On the 28th, the King, too, arrived in Strelitz. Now, Louise's happiness was complete. She rejoiced at receiving her husband for the first time in her father's house, where she was still the daughter, and in spontaneous gladness she sat down at the Duke's desk and wrote on a scrap of paper, "Dear father, to-day I am very happy as your daughter and as the wife of the best of men." These were her last written words! The King noted in regard to his own journey: "At five o'clock in the afternoon I arrived in

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Strelitz. . . . The entire family and the court welcomed me as I got out of my carriage. My wife, who was there and looked in good spirits, was particularly happy to receive me for the first time as daughter of the house. After the first greetings, she conducted me to her own room and saw that I had everything I needed to clean myself from the dust and to refresh myself, as it was very hot. She informed me that she had told her father that no room was necessary for me as I would prefer to come in with her. . . . My wife, although she complained, was *en beau* in a dark silk dress, with her hair curled. Together with the Duke I drove to the so-called Castle Common; my wife was with her grandmother, etc., in an open carriage (my Russian travelling carriage) . . . and there, on a spacious grass-plot, under an oak-tree, tea and milk were served. Here, too, my wife busied herself to give me all just as I was accustomed to have it. . . . Later, there was a stroll down to the sea. . . . The carriages awaited us on the road to Myrow, where we got in to drive back through the city which was decorated with garlands and wreaths . . . and

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then to Hohenzieritz, which was also adorned with arches and other decorations. What an entry—and what an end!”

Louise felt, when she arrived in Hohenzieritz, very exhausted and her head ached. But she did not want to spoil the pleasure of her husband and her relations and stayed up to supper. She passed a very bad night, got up on the following day so as to appear at the mid-day meal. She still hoped to drive with the King to Rheinsberg on the 30th, and tried to save herself for that. Her condition did not improve. She spent the day partly in bed and partly on the sofa; but she was cheerful and hopeful. Doctor Hieronymi, the Duke's physician, decided she had a high fever which would not be of long duration; but the day following no improvement was apparent. Louise had to consent to stay some days longer in Hohenzieritz, while important affairs called the King back to Berlin. On July 3rd, he departed, fairly reassured, since the doctor had said that there was no ground for anxiety. There was no talk of danger. In a few days, the Queen would be recovered and able to follow him. Frederic William, himself,

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had fever and was obliged to stay in bed for a few days after reaching home. The bulletins of Hieronymi from Hohenzieritz were not at all alarming. As the King himself was ill and needed his personal physician, the latter was not sent to Strelitz. Nor was Hufeland available, being with the King of Holland.

Not until there was a suggestion from the Prince Solms-Lych that it was not going well with the Queen was the Geheimrat Heim sent to the sick woman. He, too, found her seriously ill, indeed, but not dangerously so. She was suffering from a severe inflammation of the lungs, but there were no complications to dread. In a few weeks, it was hoped that the Queen would be completely restored to health. So Heim returned to Berlin. The King was still ill and unable, much as he wished it, to visit his wife. Louise herself did not desire him to come until she felt quite well again. Frederic William thought she wanted to spare him the sight of her terrible sufferings. For she did suffer unspeakably. The frightful spasms in the chest and the painful cough tormented her night and day. The fever did not fall at all.

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Frederica was with her continuously and nursed her beloved sister with tender devotion. Later, Frau von Berg joined her and shared the care with Frederica. Both stayed by her every minute.

From day to day, Louise's condition grew worse. Her breath was short and her cough unremittent. Then came terrible oppression of the heart, that caused the most severe pain. On the 16th and 17th, the heart spasms were so violent that the invalid was almost stifled. Heim, together with Gehrke and Schmidt, were summoned hastily from Berlin. They arrived on the 17th. The doctors found that the lungs were seriously congested and that it was hardly possible to save her. Not until the 19th, did the King at last come. A courier had been sent for him. By that time, death was written on Louise's white face. On the 18th Frederic William had received the terrifying news that his wife was in danger. "I lost my self-command to such an extent," he wrote, "that I could hardly make an intelligent decision. . . . To describe the condition in which I found myself is quite impossible: I was as one dis-

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tracted, and I did not wish to let my despondency be evident. . . . As soon as I had finished with Hardenberg, I set out, taking my two eldest sons with me. . . . Tears flowed freely. The departure was terrible but the return was more so." He called this July 19th the most unfortunate day of his life, and under this heading he noted everything he had passed through.

When he and his two sons reached Hohenzieritz at 5:45 A.M., Heim came to meet him and warn him that it was going badly with the Queen and she wanted to speak to him immediately. But how startled Frederic William was when he entered the sick-room and saw the change in Louise. The excessive pain and rack-ing cough had altered her features. And yet with what joy she received the King! She embraced him again and again and pressed him to her heart. She kissed him tenderly and he wept bitterly. Again she tried to speak to him. He had to hold her hand in his, which she pressed to her lips with the tenderest fervour. She, the dying one, asked about his illness and was indignant that he had travelled in an open vehicle!

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"In the night, after thy fever?" she asked anxiously. But her voice hardly obeyed her. The spasms were violent, breath was very short, gasping, sometimes convulsive, and frequently her clear accents failed, so that she cried out, "Air, air!"

The King sat on the edge of the bed, old Countess von Voss kneeled in front of the dying woman and both rubbed her hands alternately. Then Prince Fritz and Prince William were brought in and she was happy to see them. After that the King remained alone with her. Overcome with grief, Frederic William sank down by her bed, kissed her hands and sobbed out: "It is not possible that it is God's will to separate us. I am only happy with thee and only through thee has life any charm for me. Thou art the single friend in whom I have confidence. If God should order it otherwise, take me too." He was completely desperate. Louise was greatly agitated by this scene. Yet she managed to smile and say, "Do not pity me or I die." Then she kissed him on the mouth for the last time, pressed his hand tenderly as he asked if she were still good to him.

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The cramps had abated a little, also the heart spasms. And Louise still had hopes of recovery. Or perhaps she simply wished to comfort the poor disconsolate man at her side, when she said, a few minutes before her death, "Do not fear, dear friend, I am not going to die." But the death sweat was already on her forehead and the death pallor was evident. It was nine o'clock. Her head turned a little to one side. At last, when the spasms almost choked her, she opened her great blue eyes and cried out, "I am dying, Jesu! Make it short!" A few minutes later, she was gone.

In her, the King had lost everything. His pain at the bereavement bordered on distraction. He kept returning to the room where Louise lay, cold and lifeless. He could not part from her. In perfect silence he went with his four children—Karl and Charlotte, unfortunately, came too late, after the mother's death and the little ones had remained at Berlin—into the death chamber and together they spread roses from the Hohenzieritz garden over Louise's breast. Just before departure, they all stood by the dead mother for the last time.

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Sobbing, the King kissed the cold forehead and took his final farewell. Then they travelled home. But what a homecoming!

And a few days later, Louise was brought to Berlin. What a contrast to her departure! In a beautiful travelling carriage, with anticipation of a speedy return, she had started out so happily! And now she was brought back in a coffin. Grief and anxiety had wrought their ravages upon her delicate health, and she was forced, young as she was, to part from the life that she loved dearly in the midst of family happiness. Under the shadow of the lofty firs in the park of Charlottenburg, she found her last resting place.

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